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The Altered Mobile Home: A Stationary Image of Work and Value

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THE ALTERED MOBILE HOME:
A STATIONARY IMAGE OF WORK AND VALUE

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Preface

After completing a large portion of this thesis, I thought about what I would have liked to emphasized more about these builders. I soon realized that these builders and designers, who you will soon read about, are building and creating something that is very close to their lives. I am sure that when they began building they had certain goals in mind and certain values they deemed important. As they built their homes, however, and found that goals would not be reached and values would be diminished in face of realities, they, no doubt, made reassessments. These altered mobile homes are a stationary image of this process of reassessment, compromise and creation. That is the beauty of each form.

Whether we admit to it or not, all of our lives, like these homes, express this process and creation. As human beings, we tenaciously hold on to values that we incorporate and assign to our lives. As we grow older, however, and our lives change, our reasons for adhering to specific values and beliefs may no longer be applicable. We in turn, must reassess, compromise, and create.

Of course, there are many people to thank for helping me create this thesis. Overall, I think that if it were not for the conversations with Dr. Michael Ann Williams during

the course of my graduate school experience I would not have been able to use folklore as a means of inquiring about my life and others around me, or to take the folklore discipline and apply it to more than just specific genres and inclusive theories. She has done many things for me, but this was most important. Dr. Erika Brady came to this university just in time for me to learn from her. I hope to continue the friendship which I hold dearly. I wish that everyone's editor could be as excellent as she has been. Dr. Ed Counts and Dr. Lynwood Montell have inspired me when at times I was doubtful.

Many friends have helped me sort out ideas concerning this work, Kevin and Ken especially. Kira has been patient when others have not. Mark L. provided me with my first contacts, Willie and Sue, who they in turn, exposed to me many ideas and thoughts. Dr. Nathan Love seemed to have never tired from my questions about WordPerfect. Without the help and consent of the families I came in contact with, this thesis would not have been written. I thank them very much. Also, a university graduate grant helped finanically support this work. Thanks to all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE ALTERED MOBILE HOME:
A STATIONARY IMAGE OF WORK AND VALUE

Gregory Kendall Jenkins February 1990 101 Pages

Directed by: Erika Brady, Ed Counts, Lynwood Montell, and Michael Ann Williams

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As the medium cost of conventional housing rises, many people unable to incur such an expense look for alternative forms of adequate housing. In rural areas surrounding Bowling Green, Kentucky, several families have utilized the mobile home as a base to expand, embellish, and personalize, creating a larger more conventional-looking home. Many of these altered homes possess gabled roofs, rock exterior walls, and expansive interior space. Of primary concern is: why have these families undertaken a project of this nature?

As material culture scholars and folklorists examine our built environment, they find relationships between construction and the builders. What can the altered mobile home tell us about these individual builders? A contextual analysis examining the surrounding landscape, economic dilemmas, and personal aesthetics and values help elucidate each altered mobile home. Also, by examining the individual builder's work technique, materials, and values associated with housing, one can understand how each mobile home is a direct reflection of its owner.

Since the mobile home's creation, the public's conception of the form has lead to claims that it is not a housing form, but rather an accessory for the automobile. Steadfast values associated with housing have not adhered to the image of the mobile home. Because of this ambiguity, the mobile home is an ideal form for individuals to mold and alter, thereby creating a form imbued with personal aesthetics and personal values concerning housing. These ideas are examined through analysis of four families.

Introduction

> We cannot think of housing as an isolated entity or structure--it is part of a physical and social environment.[1]

Housing must be assessed in a humanistic perspective. Architectural structures reflect the immense diversity of ways in which we choose to manipulate our environment. Our need to survive gives rise to these manipulations. Everyone has similar essential housing needs, "but in practice actual needs are socially conditioned and therefore differ profoundly from one human group to another."[2] As scholars study the multifarious aspects of human life, contextual studies provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of our oral traditions and material culture. New York rowhouses are engulfed in social aspects of economics, traditions, and aesthetics in much the same way as farm house complexes found in Maine. René Dubos places the importance of our built environment in proper perspective by noting:

> The characteristics of the environment are . . . of importance not only because they affect the comfort and quality of present-day life, but even more because they condition the development of young people and thereby of society.[3]

My first realization that people lived in different architectural structures occurred when I was six. After living with my mother in a basement flat in London, England,

we moved to Pineville, Kentucky to live with my grandmother, in her large house. The two-story, nine-room brick dwelling contrasted immensely with the three-room basement I had previously lived in. Six months later my mother and I moved again. This time we occupied a ten by fifty-five foot mobile home located in a small mobile home park at the base of an abandoned coal mine in Whitesburg, Kentucky. I had lived in three distinctive housing environments within eight months.

I went on to live in this mobile home for five years, although my mother and I moved the mobile home to Hillsborough, North Carolina, after spending six months in Whitesburg. In looking back now, two elements contributed to the housing environment in which I lived. One element comprised my involvement with the actual interior of the structure I resided within, while the other element was the outer or neighboring environment which engulfed both me and the mobile home.

Everyone creates niches within physical spatial environments, and my mother and I were no different in this regard. Inside the mobile home we created various spatial allotments within the living room. The right half of the room was carved into an art studio; the center of the room served as a typical living room; and on the left side of the room we created a mini-den complete with a desk and book cases.

After living in the ten by fifty-five foot mobile home for almost five years in a park surrounded by children, dogs, and trees, we moved. This time we occupied a larger mobile home, but in a more sterile outer environment. There were now few dogs, few children, and still fewer trees. We lived there for four years.

During those latter years I began to learn why my mother chose for us to live in a mobile home. It provided a relatively inexpensive means of shelter. At times, the space was cramped; however, it did afford us some privacy from each other and our neighbors located sixty feet away. My mother owned the mobile home, so we could alter the interior in any manner we chose. It provided us the highest possible degree of autonomy short of owning a conventional home. Occasionally all of these thoughts come to mind now, when, eight years after living in mobile homes, I see them in the distance while driving.

In February, 1988, I was working on a video project in Morgantown, Kentucky. While commuting to Morgantown via U.S. 231, I began to notice a peculiar housing form located on this winding rural road. Often as I maneuvered a curve in the road, I saw something that resembled a mobile home tucked among cedars and oaks. After many quick glances I realized it was indeed a mobile home, although it had been altered. After those initial encounters, I began to notice an abundance of these types of homes along the county roads

of Warren and Barren counties.

The types of alterations on these mobile homes varied as widely as the rolling hills in south central Kentucky. Some merely had side additions jutting out from the central unit, while others, resembling ranch houses, were low, flat, long, and wide. A closer look revealed that these particular homes were actually two trailers, often of unequal lengths, pulled side by side, sharing a common roof that was constructed of trusses and asphalt shingles. These mobile home units provided more living space and resembled design innovations found in conventional homes. The homes' additions appeared to be built not by professional contractors, but rather by the owners. Further, all of the additions possessed varying shapes and styles.

The presence of these structures led me to wonder whether the people residing in them share with my mother the desire for autonomy and the ability to alter their dwelling freely. One method of inquiry which I utilized in this study was to interview these owners and ask questions about their lives and their mobile homes.

In addition to inquiring about their quest for autonomy I also examined other themes. While these occupants of mobile homes are living in a non-traditional housing form, one that is manufactured, they are acting in a traditional manner when they manipulate their homes to suit their personal needs and aesthetics. Their acts of manipulation

and expression of personal aesthetics are visible in the landscape surrounding the mobile home form. For example, fieldstone is used for underpinning, salvageable material enables builders to construct add-ons, and stone and cedar is used to fence and landscape yards. For hundreds of years men and women have been altering and redesigning their living environments to suit personal aesthetics and community customs. Those that alter their mobile homes in Warren County are thus acting out an ages old tradition by exerting control over their environmental surroundings.

I inquired about initial factors which influence the owners' decision to manipulate their home. What determines the design of the structures? To what degree does the core form influence the structural changes? How do monetary limitations inhibit the owners' design decisions? Does the existing landscape influence the design of the structure? How does the enactment or performance of manipulating the mobile home alter the lives of the owners? After the mobile home is altered, do the owners perceive the dwelling as a mobile home or as house? Any number of these cultural factors influence the owners' design decisions of the form.

Manipulated mobile homes can only be understood by examining the contexts surrounding them and their owners. By revealing economic realities, along with aesthetic tastes of the owners, each mobile home can be seen as a negotiated product of those circumstances.

In this thesis I will examine four families and their homes. Each of these families has varying reasons why they built their homes the way they did. Willie's home is a product of nine years of work during which he and his wife, Sue, have altered their perceptions of how the home would suit their needs. Their home, then, represents a physical embodiment of how they wish to live their lives. Dale's home reveals how the core form influences his decisions concerning the design of the addition. Rudy and Louise's home embodies a household's desire for autonomy and personal expression without feeling pressure from neighbors and landlords. For William, his desire was to obtain land so he could freely build adjacent to his mobile home. He now has seven acres of land and is in the process of encapsulating his mobile home with fieldstones.

All of these structures are categorized as vernacular. The term "vernacular" denotes any building that is not designed by professional architects. Precise definitions of the term have been omitted from material culture scholarship. Most definitions consist of similar references akin to the definition stated below by R. W. Brunskill:

> The ultimate in vernacular architecture will have been designed by an amateur, probably the occupier of the intended building, and one without any training in design, he will have been guided by a series of conventions built up in his locality, paying little attention to what may be fashionable on an international scale. The function of his building would be the dominant factor, aesthetic considerations, though present to some small degree, being quite minimal; tradition would guide

> constructional as well as aesthetic choice, and local materials would be used as a matter of course, other materials being chosen and imported quite exceptionally.[4]

Although some folklorists would probably disagree on certain points of this definition, the key phrases concurred by most scholars are: tradition; aesthetic choice; and use of local materials.

In a recent article published in Material Culture, the term vernacular was defined distinctive of a "folk" form. Kingston Heath writes that a vernacular form is one that must pass through a "vernacular threshold." The vernacular threshold is reached, Heath observes, by altering a conventional form to meet the needs of the user and by adapting it to the local environment, thus becoming "of a place." One example in the article that has specific bearing to this study is a mobile home altered by an owner in upper Montana. The owner constructed a pitched roof over his dwelling to counter heavy snows and also placed hay bales around the base of the mobile home to help retain heat. In constructing the form in response to environmental factors in the region, the owner may have also expressed his personal aesthetic by choosing certain patterns in placing the hay under his home. If other members living in the region embrace these ideas or variants of them, Heath claims, the form has become a vernacular of the region.[5]

R. W. Brunskill examines the terminology of vernacular

threshold in a slightly different manner. For Brunskill, the threshold represents an era, graphically illustrated as a timeline, in which buildings have survived pressures of deterioration and "polite," high-style architecture.[6]

A survey of recent scholarship by folklorists should reveal some perspectives from which the mobile home form can be understood. Up until the 1960s most scholarship examined an item in question as though it were a "text." Typically, these texts were analyzed within the confines of their particular genre. Similar ballads were collected and compared to each other, shedding light on their diffusions and characterizing regional patterns. Although texts changed over time, little attention was paid to personal aesthetics of the performer or the enactment of the performance as a major reason for textual change. For many folklorists, neither the individual, nor the act of performance was viewed as a contributing factor of the variant motifs and genres. For the majority of folklorists during this time collecting and classifying folklore was paramount. For years folklorists thought that the "folk" and the "lore" would soon be swept away by industrialism and the rise of urban living.

By the 1960s, folklorists engulfed in theoretical concerns began focusing on process and performance in the creation of verbal texts. As folklorists examined the process and performance of these "texts" it seemed natural

to extend the nomenclature boundries to also include material culture. Henry Glassie's groundbreaking work, Folk Housing in Middle Virginia, published in 1975, emphasized that attention must be focused on the folk builder and not just the building. Glassie postulated a structural linguistic model that would reveal the mind of the builder. By utilizing a generative grammar, influenced by theories of Chomsky and Lèvi-Strauss, Glassie derived a set of housing plans which led him to infer builders' patterns for adding and reducing forms in constructing houses. Glassie conducted no interviews and rarely researched historical documents. Yet he concluded that by using a structural grammar, scholars could derive mental "templates" of folk builders. Glassie believed that material culture could be used as a mirror to reflect the embodiment of ideas held by society.[7]

Also in 1975, Michael Owen Jones concluded that underlying influences affecting the creation of a folkloric "text" could be revealed by inquiring into the maker's personal motivations, values and aesthetics, as part of the examination of the process of creation. Unlike Glassie, Jones did conduct interviews to reveal individual responses by folk artist. Since the publication of Jones's The Handmade Object and Its Maker in 1975, several folkloristic studies in art and architecture have focused on individual artists and their work rather than postulating broad

generalizations and regional trends.[8]

A later inquiry by Jones examined ways in which people alter their dwelling over time, influenced by economics and aesthetics. In "L.A. Add-ons and Re-dos: Renovation in Folk Art and Architectural Design," he "directs attention away from the traditional form of the house to 'traditional' actions that are performed on that house."[9] These traditional actions include responding to changing physical needs, taking advantage of attractive financial situations, maintaining a sense of control over oneself, attaining sensory goals, actualizing self through symbolic statements, and providing a basis for communication and interaction.[10] Jones's work has set a precedent in recent scholarship which focuses on performance and individual motivation involving folk art and vernacular architecture.

A recent study by Elizabeth Cromly examining the modernizing of homes in the residential districts of old industrial areas of Brooklyn, Queens and Hoboken revealed that homeowners typically chose to use modern synthetic materials which also possessed an apperance of a traditional form. While the materials chosen offered the owners the conveniences of durability, low costs, and abundance, they also revealed tradional connotations. In choosing to use aluminum clapboard, homeowners conveyed associations with the nineteeth century farmhouse. Thus Cromly stated:

> While the houseowner wants a car with the most up-to-date design, he also wants a house that is full of

> associations with the past. Neither owners nor manufacturers seem to have made a conscious choice in this direction--the symbolic value of materials has been tacitly preferred, provided and taken for granted. People want their houses to be rich with associations and the vocabulary of modernism doesn't provide any links with domestic tradition."

Interviews with mobile home owners that follow later in this paper do mention combining synthetic and natural materials to bring about a form that connotes both tradition and modernism. Mobile home owners in Warren County, Kentucky, like home owners in Brookyln, appeal to their aesthetic preferences by choosing materials which reflect values pertaining to durability, frugality, and mental associations of "home."

Similar to mobile homes, suburban tract houses typically possess uniform designs throughout the neighborhood. In one study, Elizabeth Adler focused on a subdivision in Lexington, Kentucky, where owners transcended de facto and de jure boundaries regulating the alteration of their homes. She found that almost every home owner had altered the dwelling to reveal his own aesthetics and personalities. Although the home owners abided by community standards which curtailed their eccentric personal tastes, some elaborate renovations were found on the rear of the homes, out of sight from neighbors. The fronts of homes on the other hand were characterized by stylistic retentions. Thus, each home renovation was a hybrid, influenced by both community standards and expressive individual aesthetics.[12]

For years folk art scholarship has focused on the use of salvageable materials in creating material objects. A recent publication by Geraldine Johnson entitled Weaving Rag Rugs examines the rag rug tradition in western Maryland. According to Johnson, the process of using salvageable material reaffirms for the community the notion of thrift and the need to practice sensible financial manners. The rag rug tradition not only provides additional income for the artists, it also fosters social interaction. By maintaining the tradition, the artisans affirm a sense of place for themselves within their community.[13] Those that manipulate their mobile homes, no doubt recognize similar ethics of thrift which afford them a feeling of self control and unity with the landscape.

Because people develop personal values associated with thrift, self control, and traditions, they assume roles that will reflect their beliefs for others to acknowledge. Varni Greenfield, using a behavioralist analysis, states that a person who has become identified by the community as a maker and craftsperson is usually reinforced in that role because of the affirmed community recognition. Also, as others identify the craftsperson, the maker is provided with an increase in self-esteem which reinforces the self-image of creator.[14] One informant whom I interviewed is constantly doing handiwork for himself and others. There is little doubt that his ceasless work has molded an image of himself

which projects a public persona and also reinforces his own self-perception.

Although research has been conducted concerning the use of salvageable materials in crafts, little has yet been done relating to vernacular architecture. Several questions which may be asked are: Are owners who alter mobile homes using salvageable materials for the same reasons as quilt and rug makers? How does the use of salvageable materials affect the creator's sense of aesthetics concerning the finished form? If they do not use salvageable materials, what materials are they using? If such materials are purchased, how are they made to create a traditional look? The mobile home owner who alters a dwelling with salvageable material may place a higher aesthetic value on the act of manipulation than on the cosmetic appearance of the final form.

No doubt every material culture scholar has been influenced by Franz Boas's Primitive Art, first published in 1927. Franz Boas's scholarship can be interpreted to more fully understand the mobile home manipulator who gains aesthetic pleasures deriving from the act of manipulation. As Boas has stated, and others have paraphrased for years, "All human activities may assume forms that give them esthetic values."[15] These aesthetic values are essentially personal assessments of the perfection of form. Boas also claims that aesthetic senses are stimulated not by form

alone, "but also by close associations that exist between the form and ideas held by the people." These ideas held by the people are, in essence, symbols that arise from their contemplation of the form. Art, then, is based on the perfection of form and their ideas associated with that form.[16] Perfection of form, however, is not necessary in order for it to be art.

Art, then, can be understood as a process of contemplation, whether physical or mental, of the form. I believe the attempt or performance striving toward a final form can satisfy the makers' desire for control and personal aesthetic directed toward that form. Therefore, in examining mobile home alterations one must be concerned with both the makers' contemplation of the form and the actual outcome of that form. Are these two compatible, or do discrepancies arise after the final form has been manipulated? How does the builder appease his sense of aesthetics when imperfections of form arise? Even Boas alludes to the practical realities of attempting to obtain perfection of form when he states: "When the technical treatment has attained a <u>certain</u> standard of excellence, when the control of the process involved is such that <u>certain</u> typical forms are produced, we call the process an art . . . ."[17] This statement also reveals Boas's acknowledgment of the role of performance in the creation of art. When examining manipulated mobile homes, a researcher

should be aware of the effort directed towards the completion of the form rather than discerning only its final stage. These builders, no doubt, do hold aesthetic opinions throughout their act of manipulation.

The historical development of the mobile home industry as well as the emergence of the altered mobile home embodies ideas of personal aesthetics, control over one's environment, and attainment of affordable shelter. In Chapter One of this thesis I will examine the history of mobile home manufacturing. The mobile home, like the automobile, rose in popularity in the 1920s. As the automobile provided more mobility and freedom, Americans naturally turned toward an innovation providing living accommodations that could be pulled by an automobile. The ability to control one's living environment was now expanded to include mobility. The growth in manufacturing of the travel trailer, then the mobile home, has commanded much public scrutiny. The eventual non-mobility of the mobile home, arising from the production of larger models, coupled with more design amenities, however, has helped foster a changing conception of the form. A history of mobile home manufacturing will augment the reader's understanding of the manipulated mobile homes to be discussed in later chapters.

In Chapter Two I will address a man and wife's work undertaken over the last nine years. Aspects of the husband's work technique will reveal factors that influenced

the outcome of the home's form. Issues of economics, self-determination, and aesthetics will be addressed to complement personal experience narratives and descriptive passages.

In Chapter Three I will discuss three other families who have manipulated their mobile homes. Each of the three families' homes have differing characteristics. I will show how the landscape, economics, and the personal aesthetics of the builders influenced the outcome of the final forms.

In conclusion I will address some issues which will reveal that these homes are a synthesis of values and materials. I will defend that the public's conception of the mobile home as a housing form helps facilitate this synthesis process.

To this date less than a dozen scholarly articles have appeared concerning this type of housing form. Most of these articles have focused only on a limited typology; very few have concentrated on occupants' aesthetics of the dwelling or reasons for particular construction design. It is my desire to examine the mobile home form contextually as it is related to personal aesthetics of design and spatial manipulation of the pre-existing form.

Much of the research for this study was conducted during March through October of 1989. The fieldwork undertaken in this study took place in Warren County, Kentucky. After an initial contact with one man, realizing

the abundance of these homes in Warren County, I decided to limit my field study to this county. Taped-interviews with the owners and designers account for almost all of the information about the construction and conception of this particular form.

The purpose of the thesis is not to devise a regional or county typology related to the forms in question, but rather to come to an understanding of why these forms exist, what decisions were made in choosing certain designs, and how these forms were built. The reader could consider this a regional study to the extent that aesthetics of design are closely related to community values and customs and economic hardships for a percentage of the population in the region. I hope this study will be a reverent recognition of those who have attempted to satisfy their aesthetic senses, while providing adequate housing for their families.

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2. René Dubos, "Our Buildings Shape Us," in Housing Perspectives: Individuals and Families, 4-5.

3. Ibid., 10.

4. R. W. Brunskill, Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), 25. For other definitions related to vernacular architecture see also; Dell Upton, in Built in the U.S.A.: American Buildings from Airports to Zoos, ed. Diane Maddex (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1985), 167-171. Warren Roberts, Untitled essay, Material Culture 17 (Summer-Fall 1985): 89-93, and other essays in this special issue.

5. Kingston Wm. Heath, "Defining the Nature of Vernacular," Material Culture 20 (1988): 4-7.

6. Brunskill, 25-29.

7. Henry Glassie, Folk Housing in Middle Virgina (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975).

8. J. E. Limon and M. J. Young, "Frontiers, Settlements, and Development in Folklore Studies, 1972-1985," Annual Review Anthropology 15 (1986): 451-52.

9. Limon and Young, 453. Referring to Michael Owen Jones, "L.A. Add-ons and Re-dos: Renovation in Folk Art and Architectural Design," in Perspectives on American Folk Art, eds. Ian M. G. Quimby and Scott T. Swank (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980), 325-63.

10. Jones, "L. A. Add-ons," 330-37.

11. Elizabeth Collins Cromley, "Modernizing: Or, 'You Never See a Screen Door on Affluent Homes'," Journal of American Culture 5 (Summer 1982): 72-75.

12. Elizabeth Mosby Adler, "Personality and Conformity in Expansion Architecture," Material Culture 19 (Summer-Fall 1987): 127-138.

13. Geraldine Johnson, Weaving Rag Rugs: A Women's Craft in Western Maryland (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977), 146-47.

14. Verni Greenfield, Making Do or Making Art: A Study of American Recycling (Ann Arbor, MI.: UMI Research Press, 1986), 98.

15. Franz Boas, Primitive Art (New York: Dover Publications, 1955 [1927]), 9.

16. Ibid., 12-13.

17. Ibid., 10, emphasis added.

Historical Sketch of the Mobile Home

Mobility and freedom are two factors that have spurred the popularity of the travel trailer and the mobile home. As the popularity of the automobile grew in the 1920s, so too did that of the travel trailer.

As early as 1921 makeshift tent structures mounted on two-wheeled trailer beds were used for vacation and camping purposes. In 1929 Arthur G. Sherman began large-scale production of travel coaches. His Covered Wagon Company built trailers which were nine feet long and six feet wide, equipped with windows, folding bunks, and coal burning stoves. According to Harold A. Davidson, by 1936 trailer manufacturing was the fastest growing industry in the United States. The estimated number of manufacturers for that year range from three hundred to two thousand. During that time most trailer manufacturers were based near automotive manufactures in Michigan and Indiana.[1]

The innovation of the travel trailer derived from both automobile and housing industry design concepts. The problem of balancing mobility and stability, however, while creating conflicts, has been a decisive factor in the varied design innovations of the travel trailer. Allan D. Wallis, a design scholar, views the travel trailer as a hybrid that has developed from "accommodating" this conflict.[2] This

conflict arose in part from the public's perception of the form. While some viewed it as a threat to traditional residential housing, others merely considered the form an extension of the automobile.

Several factors are allied with the evolution in design of the travel trailer, then later the mobile home. The travel trailer provided the consumer a unit that served as an inexpensive housing unit, and yet could also be used for vacation purposes. Early production of the travel trailer, however, was designed mainly for the vacationer who desired an alternative to motels and hotels. The Mobile Homes Manufactures Association estimated that in 1937 fifty percent of the total industry sales were allocated for vacation purposes. Sales to retired individuals accounted for thirty-five percent. The travel trailer was not solely used as a permanent inexpensive stationary dwelling, but also as a vehicle for vacationing. By now only fifteen percent of total sales were to those in migratory occupations which included workers in agriculture, sales, entertainment, and construction.[3] Although the migratory workers' needs for affordable housing as they resided and left regions were congruent to the needs of vacationers, there is little doubt that the migratory workers saw the travel trailer as a structure that could facilitate the needs of their households. While the travel trailer during the mid 1930s averaged eight feet in width and thirty-five

feet in length, it was still too small to accommodate space needed for families and modern conveniences.

While the migratory workers' use of the the travel trailer as a "mobile home" influenced the design of the hybrid, conflicts also occured among owners, manufacturers, and local officials. As the Depression forced more families into migration in search of economic stability, trailer manufacturing grew astonishingly. The upsurge in the use of travel trailers for temporary housing by migratory workers later influenced the design of the homes. In 1936 an estimated 250,000 trailers housing nearly a million people were in use.[4] As migratory workers bought more trailers, the need for trailer parks grew. Most parks at that time were neither landscaped, nor had adequate sanitation facilities, and few afforded large enough lot space to afford comfortable space between neighbors. The stereotype of today's mobile home courts emerged from realities of parks in the 1930s. Zoning ordinances were virtually nonexistent, and thus many parks encroached upon stable residential neighborhoods. Permanent residents began to feel that trailer owners would not contribute to the community, while city official rationalized that trailer dwellers would evade their fair share of property taxes.

Trailer manufacturers believed that these disparaging attitudes could be alleviated if trailers were to become less streamlined and resemble conventional housing.

Manufactures also wanted to redesign trailer parks to resemble subdivisions, but because the majority of consumers during the 1930s bought the travel trailer because of its mobility and freedom, little design change occurred.[5] Not until after World War II, as housing shortages became prevalent, did the basic form change. The growth of the industry and the change in size and style of the travel trailer were due to the process of accommodating features from which the hybrid was created. Manufacturers attempted to reinforce the positive aspects of the trailer and remove negative ones. During this era, consumer, city official, and manufacturer played an important role in the changing design of the travel trailer.[6]

A second stage of manufacturing development occurred during the second World War. In 1940, as Americans prepared for a defense buildup, housing problems began to emerge. As vacant plants began to reopen and as new ones were built, housing shortages for construction workers and employees arose. In 1940, the government bought 1,500 trailer units to house construction workers. Because of the ease in manufacturing trailer homes, older men and women could aid in the construction, thereby freeing younger men for active military service. Statistically, it took 112 work hours to build trailer homes as opposed to 1,000 work hours for conventional homes.[7]

By 1943 sixty percent of trailer homes manufactured

went to defense production areas. Because of a shortage in raw materials during this time, trailer chassis were typically made of wood, and thus substandard. Many authoritities believed that after the war these trailers could be used for classroom facilities, but because of their poorly constructed chassis most were scrapped after the war.[8]

The post-war period dramatically changed the trailer home industry. After the war, as veterans returned and bought homes, shortages occurred again. Because the conventional housing industry was besieged by higher costs and longer completion times, housing shortages helped boost the trailer industry by offering inexpensive temporary housing. By 1950 only one percent of the total sales of trailer homes were to the vacation market, while forty-five percent went towards temporary housing.[9] By 1954 the conventional housing market had made its way back into the forefront, no longer confronted with shortages, and subsequentially trailer home sales lessened. Because of these changes, prospective home owners were now able to buy homes which satisfied their personal preferences and aesthetics which were not guaranteed during the shortage. By 1955, the trailer industry was then forced to remarket their product to appeal to a wider array of consumers.

The year 1955 is considered the beginning of the industrialized house: the mobile home. During this year

the advent of the ten foot wide home occurred. This unit was called a mobile home because of its larger size, and the added amenities also found in most conventional houses. The larger home did have some drawbacks; for example, the family automobile could no longer pull the unit. The moving unit was now restricted to commercial trucking. Because of their larger size and higher cost of transportation, most homes were not moved after being placed on the site with their appropriate block foundation. This shift in production size occurred mainly because the consumer now bought mobile homes out of preference. The older eight-wide with space limitations could not house the modern conveniences that lured a consuming public. The new ten-wide offered enough additional space to provide a hallway which could separate bedrooms and afford more privacy for a family. Kitchen facilities also improved with the additional space. The mobile home was now able to compete with lower cost conventional house.[10]

Whether any one reason can be attributed to the new design or the shift in consumer preferences is not sure. When the mobile home became larger, difficulties in moving forced owners to remain relatively stable. The post-war era and the rise of conservatism in the 1950s brought about a national concern for stability and prosperity and a demand for adequate housing; this may have helped facilitate the design change. Mobile home manufacturing increased

dramatically during this time. The first year in which the industry sold more than 100,000 units occured in 1955. Larger production companies established branch plants across the nation to curb the high costs of transportation. All units sold then, as today, included transportation to the site. To help to mitigate the bad image of unattractive parks, the Mobile Homes Manufacturers Association and government agencies made efforts to publish manuals that informed potential park developers about costs of finance, landscape designs, and optimum spatial design for varying acreage.[11] Financial institutions also helped push the mobile home into the realm of industrial housing by allowing longer mortgage periods from the typical one of three years. Loans were extended up to five years, and down payments were reduced to twenty-five percent, while interest payments were also reduced to six percent. The Federal Government also acknowledged the mobile home in 1955 by authorizing the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) to insure loans up to sixty percent of the value to construct mobile home parks. All of these factors pushed the mobile home into the forefront of industrialized housing, subsequently changing the concept of housing overall.[12]

During that time, two-family duplex units were also being developed, although mobile home sales were far larger. Researchers believed the mobile home's popularity surpassed the duplex because it was analogous to the conventional one-

family encapsulated unit. In 1955 three million people resided in mobile homes, but by 1969 that figure had reached upward to six million.[13]

The industry must have soon come to the realization that people bought mobile homes not solely because of their mobility, but rather because they provided an alternative to conventional housing for lesser costs. In 1959 the industry introduced the twelve foot wide home. By 1966 the 12-wide accounted for sixty-five percent of total production. As early as 1962 expandable mobile homes and double-wides were introduced to the market and have had percentages of total sales ranging from twenty percent to ten percent between the years of 1962 and 1970. By 1969 the total number of all mobile homes produced for one year had reached four hundred thousand.[14] Mobile homes were now bought in both rural and suburban areas, and were also being used for school rooms.

The 1970s marked another era of change for the mobile home. In his second address of Congress, Richard Nixon, "recognized the mobile home as a legitimate form of permanent housing and added it to the count of annual housing production."[15] Also by 1976 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) implemented building and fire regulations. Other federal programs have helped push the mobile home into the manufactured housing era. In 1969 FHA and VA programs extended mortgages and lessened interest rates for mobile home loans. In 1980 the Housing Act

mandated that all federal laws and literature use the term "manufactured housing" instead of the term mobile home.[16] Recently, as of 1985, fourteen states have passed laws prohibiting local jurisdictions from excluding manufactured homes as long as designs conform to existing housing styles in the area, although, many of these restrictions required the homes to have minimum dimensions of twenty-four feet wide by thirty-six feet long.[17] The higher cost of a double-wide, however, excludes many home owners who are then still zoned out of desirable areas. Many of these homes have typically begun to resemble conventional housing. In Florida and California condo-parks are now constructed which can not be distinguished from other subdivisioned areas, possessing homes with covered patios, car ports, and pitched roofs with shingles. Trailers, mobile homes, and manufactured homes have typically evolved as consumer's needs and desires have changed. As the need for a more affordable housing emerged, mobile homes then manufactured homes have changed in size and amenities to attract the changing desires of consumers. Additional influences in design had occurred from the outcomes of conflicts between the industry and local officials. As the manufactured home rose in popularity so too did the concern about where they would be placed and how would they be taxed. Design changes were necessary if the homes were to be placed in desirable locations in towns and residential areas. For many years

design had a minor role in the industry. In 1966 only one architect practiced within the industry. James Hill claimed that for years from within the industry very little attention was allocated toward design innovations. He also alluded to the conditions of design by stating, "mobile homes are designed by everybody: the owner and his wife, the sales manager and his wife, the secretary and the sweeper."[18] This statement reveals two perspectives concerning design. On the one hand it states that design influences emerged from an industry of workers' with opinions and ideas; while the statement also hints that the design of the mobile home form derived from the personal manipulation that change the banal form to suit the owners' tastes and personalities.

Manipulation of these forms is more frequently found in rural areas where homes are situated on personal property, rather than urban areas where lots are rented. Parks and subdivisions usually possess both de facto discriminations and de jure regulations limiting how owners can transform their dwellings for spatial and aesthetic needs.[19]

More and more, mobile homes are housing rural families. In 1983 the U. S. Department of Commerce found that of the total amount of mobile homes in the U. S. seventy-four percent were located in rural areas.[20] With over six percent of all occupied rural housing consisting of mobile homes, and also constituting forty-three percent of all new

single family units, mobile homes are a viable housing alternative in rural areas.[21] One statistic which reveals tangible realities is that of all new single family homes sold for under 15,000 dollars, mobile homes consisted of ninety-six percent of those sales.[22] As conventional homes continue to rise in price, those who are financially shut out of the market will be forced to seek alternative housing. As a result, our idealistic desire to own a "dream house" may vanish as common day realities emerge.

In a recent study entitled Beyond the American Housing Dream researchers surveyed several people to find that owning a mobile home and lot ranked second as a preference for housing alternatives. The alternatives included: owning a conventional single family home, owning a mobile home and lot, renting a single family home, owning a town house, renting a duplex, renting an apartment, and owning a mobile home on rented space.[23] It is of little surprise that owning a single family home is the number one preference. Housing preferences are partially explained by examining four housing norms: home ownership, single family detached dwelling, private outside space, and conventional construction. The researchers found that owning a mobile home and lot ranked second mainly because it satisfied three of the four housing norms, excluding the conventional construction norm.[24] The researchers found that the alternative housing which satisfied fewer of the housing

norms respectively ranked lower as a desirable housing alternative. The authors concluded that as the dream of obtaining the conventional single family detached home becomes less realistic, more people will compromise, accepting the alternative unit which satisfies their needs of obtaining the maximum number of housing norms. It was also concluded that when mobile homes are placed on lots with permanent foundations, they typically lose the social stigma ascribed to homes on rented lots in parks. Thus, "the increased scattering of mobile homes placed on permanent foundations in rural areas may become desirable housing options for many families."[25]

Mobile or manufactured homes continue to appear throughout rural areas. As one drives by dealerships, spotlights illuminate new homes possessing dormer entrance ways, pitched asphalt roofs, and sashed windows. (See Plate 1) They differ from conventional homes only in size and in the consumers' knowledge that these homes were built on an assembly line. The industry has made steady improvements to alter the design and image of these dwellings in order to lessen the social stigma and increase the appeal. Many homes located in rural areas, however, are typically older and possess the infamous rectangular features and cramped living quarters. Not until years pass will these older homes deteriorate and be replaced by the newer and larger homes. Even so, the smaller, inexpensive mobile homes will

undoubtedly be bought and placed on the landscape of our rural countryside. For years to come there will still be those who can not afford conventional housing, so the older mobile homes will be bought used, and altered as additional monies arrive and needs emerge. The primary focus of this study is to examine the people who have undertaken to alter their dwellings into a form that appeals to their sense of aesthetics, and which also provides adequate shelter for their families.

To this date folklorists have written little about the manipulated mobile home form found in rural areas. Jean Hess Bergmark has written about the trailer as a form of transitional shelter. In her article she also regards the trailer as a shelter "in transition" as well. The author commenting on encapsulated trailer homes stated:

> The transitional shelter is, in that regard, shelter "in transition" as well. In its basic alterability and expandability the trailer is a process, signalling its owner's persistent quest for pure home-owner status. It appears that degree of stability is largely signalled by the extent to which the trailer is "rooted" upon the earth, and the owners of trailers achieve a remarkable range and degree of "rootedness."[2]

The mobile home has been favored by those who live on rural land with difficult access, because of its ease in mobility. At times mobile homes are placed near conventional homes. Mobile homes may be found on family "homeplaces" next to perfectly sound inhabited homes. These households benefit both by retaining affinities to the

nuclear family and yet are able to enjoy the modern conveniences which the newer mobile home offers. The mobility of the manufactured home also provides the owners with the security of knowing that it could be moved if undesirable conflicts emerge among immediate family members. Usually the "homeplace" also affords the owners the convenience of free lot rent and ease of acquiring bootlegged utilities from the existing home.[27]

Charles E. Martin found similar usages of the mobile home in Knott County, Kentucky. The half-house, typically resembling half of a double-wide mobile home, is normally only two rooms with a shed roof. The other half, mirroring the original one, will be built later as financial conditions improve.[28] Many of these half-houses, however, are built beside mobile homes resembling full side additions with shed roofs. It is the owners' plan to build the other side someday and then sell the mobile home. These half-houses appear to be a modern symbolic equivalent to the single-pen houses built during the early part of this century, although the half-house, unlike the single-pen home, possesses a form that is noticeable incomplete. The half-house typically can be built in a week. Because construction costs are low, and land typically donated, the half-house can be built for as low $1,800. When and if the half-house is completely constructed, it elevates the owner to a respectable middle-class status in the community. When

completed, the home will be paid for and the land will have been donated freely. The half-house functions, "to suggest upward mobility to satisfy new social and economic criterions in the region," but it also portrays a physical mobility that represents the weakening relationship of children to parents.[29] Whether the half-house is built to stand on its own or built along side a mobile home, both forms convey meaningful metaphors closely aligned to the history of the mobile home and Americans' obsession with mobility and independence.

In his book Hollybush, Charles E. Martin relates the practices of folk building held around seventy years ago in eastern Kentucky. When newlywed couples needed a home, the community pitched in to help construct a single-pen or double-pen home. If the family was successful and they needed more space, they would pay for additions themselves.[30] The community, however, was responsible in helping new members obtain adequate housing. By today's standards few people can afford their "starter" home, and thus must turn towards alternative housing, which usually includes apartments or mobile homes. When I did research comparing current housing starts to mobile homes sold, and saw the stark reality of not finding homes priced under sixty thousand dollars, I understood why most people could not afford a "starter home." It is little wonder why mobile homes sales have increase by large margins since the mid

1950s. Today, mobile homes, and half-houses, much like single-pen houses built one hundred years ago, embody the need for adequate, moderately priced housing. As mobile home owners alter their dwellings in Warren County, Kentucky, they are participating in a tradition that their grandparents may have done years ago on the same hillside.

Warren County was formed in 1796 by an Act of the Legislature. Two acres of land donated by Robert Moore for public buildings appears to have helped lay the foundation in creating Bowling Green.[31] Both the Barren and Green rivers were, and up until the mid 1800s remained, commercially viable resources for Warren County. By 1828 the first steamboat arrived in Bowling Green, precipitating growth in the town, and spurring further "slack water" navigation which involved building locks and dams. Quickly following the development of river travel, investors began to survey the possibility of placing a railway through Warren County extending from Nashville to Louisville, which partially opened on 10 August 1859.[32]

Agricultural products of tobacco, hay and livestock were now shipped more frequently. By 1860 Warren County possessed an iron foundry, woolen factory, candle factory, and several flour mills.[33] Although river traffic had slackened by this time, the railroad provided Warren County with ample transportation for both shipping and personal travel up until the 1970s.

Warren County continued to prosper because of its rich farm land. Geologically, the land provides good ground for grazing cattle and low land areas still produce ample quanitities of tobacco. Hay cultivation is still prominent in the area today, as once was the dairy establishment. Oil and gas reservoirs created a small boom during the early part of the twentieth century. Large industries such as Union Underwear, Holley Carburetor, and Detrex still provide optional opportunities to work away from the farm. Today high tech manufactures are continually wooed from as far away as Japan.[34]

Mobile and manufactured homes are very popular in Kentucky and in Warren County. Statistics reveal that in 1980 mobile home households in Warren County constituted 10.9 percent of total households. In 1983 mobile homes permits issued in Warren County totaled 21.5 percent of all new housing permits for that year. Astoundingly, in 1984 mobile home permits accounted for 73.4 percent of the new housing permits issued. By 1985, however, that figure had dropped back down to 29.2 percent. In the state of Kentucky by 1980, mobile homes households accounted for 8.5 percent of total households. By comparison in Kentucky between 1983 and 1985 mobile home permits issued leveled around 24.5 percent of all new housing permits.[35]

The statistics for Warren County in 1984 are interesting. An additional chart reveals that of the

estimated number of total housing units produced in Kentucky for 1987, single-family housing accounts for 12,401 units, while 6,329 multi-family units were built, as well as 4,109 mobile homes produced.[36] Although some of those mobile homes are shipped to other states, still the mobile home industry has a sizable share of the market.

Selected labor statistics may reveal why mobile homes are so popular in Warren County. By 1984 Warren County's civilian labor force was 39,551 people, and the rate of unemployment was 7.1 percent, relatively low, while the per capita personal income in 1983 was $8,090, compared to the U.S. average of $11,687.[37] The average weekly wage held by a person in a service related job in Warren County during 1987 was $272.93.[38] Wages for those who held mining, contracting, and manufacturing positions were higher. If it is true, as economists claim, that a worker should allocate no more than a weekly wage towards housing for a month, then I suspect that many could not afford to buy conventional housing in Warren County.

Throughout the 1980s, as low wage service related jobs grew, higher wage industrial jobs lessened, placing an additional hardship on the under-educated and unskilled labor force. As skilled labor work becomes more threatened and offers less pay, used mobile homes provide housing alternatives. For less than $2,000 an addition measuring 10x65 feet can be built onto an existing mobile home. The

mobile home can provide a family with a durable, self-contained unit, capable of being moved, all for a modest cost. When one realizes that mobile homes account for twenty-five percent of all housing starts, a percentage which has increased in certain years, the mobile home must be viewed as a viable housing alternative that demands our attention.

1. Harold A. Davidson, Housing Demand: Mobile, Modular, or Conventional? (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1973), 6-7.

2. Allan D. Wallis, "House Trailers: Innovation and Accommodation in Vernacular Housing," in Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, III, eds. Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 28-29.

3. Davidson, 9.

4. Davidson, 8.

5. Wallis, 36.

6. Wallis, 29-30.

7. Davidson, 9-11.

8. Davidson, 12.

9. Davidson, 13.

10. Margaret J. Drury, Mobile Homes: The Unrecognized Revolution in American Housing (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 93-95. Also, Davidson, 15-16.

11. Robinson Newcomb, Mobile Home Parks, Part 1: An Analysis of Characteristics (Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1971).

12. Drury, 93-94.

13. Davidson, 15.

14. Drury, 95-98.

15. Wallis, 42.

16. Ibid.

17. Wallis, 42-43. See also, Lawrence Maloney, "The Mobile Home: A Stepchild No More," U. S. News and World Report, 12 April 1982, 67.

18. Drury, 161.

19. Charles C. Geisler and Hisayoshi Mitsuda, "Mobile-Home Growth, Regulation, and Discrimination in Upstate New York," Rural Sociology 52 (Winter 1987): 534-35.

20. Geisler and Mitsuda, 534.

21. Emily A. MacFall and E. Quinton Gordon, Mobile Homes and Low-Income Rural Families (Washington, D.C.: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, 1973), 6.

22. Ibid.

23. Kenneth R. Tremblay, Jr. and Don A. Dillman, Beyond the American Housing Dream: Accommodation to the 1980s (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1983), 113.

24. Tremlay and Dillman, 113.

25. Tremlay and Dillman, 119.

26. Jean Hess Bergmark, "The Trailer Home: Transition Shelter and Shelter in Transition," Kentucky Folklore Record 27 (July 1981): 98.

27. Charles E. Martin, "The Half-House: Influences in the Creation of a New Form," in Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, III, eds. Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 49. Also, Michael Ann Williams, "'Homeplace': Abandonment, Alteration, and its Multiple Purposes," Material Culture 19 (1987): 102.

28. Martin, 44.

29. Martin, 50.

30. Charles E. Martin, Hollybush: Folk Building and Social Change in an Appalachian Community (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984).

31. Irene Moss Sumpter, Our Heritage: An Album of Early Bowling Green, Kentucky Landmarks (Bowling Green, Ky.: American National Bank and Trust Co., 1978), 2-3.

32. Architecture of Warren County, Kentucky 1790-1940 (Bowling Green, Ky.: Landmark Association of Bowling Green and Warren County, Inc., 1984), 9.

33. Ibid., 12-13.

34. Ibid., 14-16.

35. The 1988 BRADD Data Book (Bowling Green, Ky.: The Barren River Development Council, 1988), 62.

36. The 1988 BRADD Data Book, 19.

37. Resources for Economic Development: Bowling Green, Kentucky (Frankfort, Ky.: Kentucky Commerce Cabinet, Department of Economic Development, 1985), 3-11.

38. The 1988 BRADD Data Book, 118.

Willie and Sue

The previous two chapters devoted to an analysis of folklife scholarship and the historical passage of the mobile home do not fully account for influences on the manipulated mobile home. Each manipulated home seen on the landscape is created by a myriad of factors. In order to more fully understand this form, aspects of economics, building materials, the surrounding landscape, and personal aesthetics must be examined. Unlike many modern conventional homes, these contexts make apparent the visual distinctiveness of each home.

When I began to do fieldwork, I immediately thought of how I wanted to present my findings. I decided not to go into the interviews with preconceptions of why these home owners did what they did. I wanted to ask questions which would help me understand why they built these homes; how they built their homes; who helped build them; and what materials they used. I also wanted to know why the owners chose to expend their energies building onto a mobile home, rather than building a conventional house. I have organized the upcoming material into clearly delineated segments devoted to four families and their manipulated mobile homes. The descriptive narratives are lengthy, resulting from my own desire to let the material speak, or rather paint, a

documented picture of the homes, the owners, and the contexts surrounding them. The material is derived mainly from two perspectives: one, being my visual perceptions of the surroundings, and two, my interpretations of the tape recorded narratives.

After an initial interview with one of my informants, Willie, I went back a few weeks later to ask some follow-up questions. When I arrived at his ranch house, located off a winding newly tarred road, he was at his garage trying to hang a spring action door to the front of the building. I did not feel like interrupting him with questions, because it was obvious that he had been working on the project and wanted to finish it. So, I stood around, lending an extra hand when Willie felt it was needed and when I felt it did not obstruct his own work method. This continued for almost an hour, and I felt comfortable in my occasional assists and conversation. I did begin to notice Willie's work technique, which enthralled me. I began to realize that the type of materials Willie worked with greatly influenced his work technique.

Willie typically bought his materials used. They were acquired by buying them outright with money, or salvaging them through the occasional tear-down jobs he did in his spare time, or still yet, by bartering unwanted materials for those that he wanted. The garage door that Willie was working on that day, like most of the materials Willie

worked with, did not have a set of installation instructions, which no doubt influenced his work technique. Coupled with no set of instructions, Willie usually worked alone on the mobile home. Willie, however, had an uncanny way of hanging the massive garage door. In attempting to hang the garage door plumb, Willie would tack one side, then alter the other side, going back and forth until he thought it was plumb. Willie did this because he was not sure how the brackets and springs were properly placed to produce the desired effect of allowing the door to rise enough to swing vertically then horizontally along the rafters of the roof. There were several options in placing the brackets which would affect the arrangement of still other items, including springs and pulley bars. Willie's work technique of using four-by-four posts as props then tacking the brackets--using nails to hold the material but only driven in far enough to bend them over, thus allowing him to retract them easily enough when he would return to reposition the piece--enabled him to hang something as large a garage door by himself, without a set of instructions, and within a minimal amount of time. As Willie went back and forth between the two sides, assessing the position and its plumb, he had nearly hung the door in less than hour. Meanwhile I stood out of his way, occasionally handing him props, watching intently.

I bring this up because during a previous interview

Willie commented on his home, which now looks more like a house than a mobile home, saying that, "Of course there's nothing true, plumb, or square in it."[1] While watching Willie hang his door, I realized why certain aspects of his home were probably not plumb. Working alone, he could not use another person to help hold something steady. Although Willie's wife, Sue, was usually around to participate in projects, even she stated that her role in the completion of the home was primarily one of design consultant. Willie lacked the benefit of help, and the construction of his home exemplifies this. Because Willie works alone, his ability to achieve "perfection" in a project cannot be equal to that of construction crews that work together.

An additional factor that has affected the "perfection" of the building is that Willie only works on his home in the spare time when he is not working at a nearby hospital. Typically, he may lay a foundation only to come back months later and realize that it has shifted somewhat. Limitations in time, additional help, and money affect his work technique and thus affect both the appearance of the home and Willie's aesthetics. Willie stated one day the reasons why the living room and other areas in his home had shifted:

> I would say eighty-five percent of that [his home] I did by myself. And a lot of it, like this little deal here hanging the garage door today. If it moved and I came back the next day, or the next week, or the next month and started working on it, I didn't necessarily go back to check to see if it had moved. And that has been the case in some instances, especially there in the living room in the corner there by the bar. That,

> I didn't realize that part had sunk on me until I started to put the drywall on it a year-and-half later, and it was too late to do anything to correct it other than to arrange the accommodations in there to where it wouldn't be as obvious as it could be.[2]

Willie's work technique, then, directly affects his sense of aesthetic. His own assessment that his house is not plumb, followed by a comment in which he shares his pleasure of the home, reveals the intricate relationship of Willie's personal aesthetic and work technique. Willie acknowledges that his work technique may have shortcomings, but the realization that the work is undertaken and a product is in the act of creation supersedes any negative associations deriving from the imperfections. One could claim that the aesthetic pleasures gained from the home are not solely derived from the finished product, but rather from the involvement of working towards the finished product.

Where other people derive extreme pleasure from the enjoyment of being in a home that is "finished," Willie's pleasure is derived more from his insistent interaction with the home. Willie's wife, Sue, claims that they've always been working on a project of one sort or another since their marriage. They have worked on three other houses prior to this mobile home. Six or eight months after they married they bought a home that was located near the local hospital from an estate sale. After that home was remodeled, they bought a farmhouse on the other side of town which they

worked on, but later lost in a fire. The home they live in now, while they work on the mobile home, was bought in a bankruptcy sale. Sue expressed a desire to finish and sell both the house and the trailer, only to begin on another project. As Sue states:

> Like being able to put the bigger house on the market, take the equity and go after another project of some kind, which is what we've always done. I mean it doesn't stop with when we get this finished. We're already looking beyond getting this finished, into renovating the house in town. He stays busy all the time with all kinds of projects . . . . The money from that then will go to buy a piece of property on a river bank, somewhere high on a river bank. And we plan on doing a prototype house that he and I have been working on.[3]

It appears that if Willie wasn't working on a project he would find something to occupy his time. When asked one day what he would do if he wasn't working on this project he claimed:

> If I ever got started fishing and frog gigging I'd do that . . . . Whatever I do I like to do a lot of. If it's junking, I like to do a lot of junking.[4]

One could infer that Willie and Sue's habits of incessantly manipulating their homes and environments has become habitual and thus closely aligned with their personalities. Although I have no training in psychology, several folklorists have delved into a psychological analysis of their informants going beyond causal relationships.[5] With mere inference I can see how Willie's work ethic and his continuance of projects in the future go hand in hand.

Willie has become someone who has been identified by others as a person who never stops. Similiar to the folk artists in Verni Greenfield's research, Willie too has become associated as a maker. Greenfield states that this identity provides positive reinforcements:

> Eventually, we may become psychically identified as a "maker," or discover that others have begun to identify us with making or fixing things. This identification may provide the maker with increased self-esteem or other positive psychic reinforcements.[6]

Some folk artists who continue practicing their crafts and skills claim that they are the only ones upholding the tradition, and that they must continue because no one in the community still participates in the tradition. Although this may or may not be a reality, the network between folk artist and community reinforces the symbiosis of craftsperson and admirer, which may further the notion that the craftsperson is "the maker," and one who can not quit. Similar beliefs relating to work and personality are postulated in the theory of "the shaping principle." Robert McCarl's research among fire fighters in Washington D.C. reveals that the work place and networks among colleagues tend to "shape" a person's identity.[7] The worker's identity, then, becomes an extension of the type of job one holds.

Part of understanding the cultural context of the manipulated mobile home form is to inquire into the daily actions of the worker that molds the form. Willie and Sue's

home is directly related to their ethic of life: one should continually strive to better one's self and one's immediate environment. Although it has taken Willie nearly nine years to finish his home, this home is not a representation of a complacent worker, but rather of a worker who has been adaptable to economic, time, and labor limitations. Because Willie did not immediately need his home for shelter, he has had the advantage of returning again and again to reassess the desired outcome of the home. He could, therefore feasibly continue to add onto the structure if space limitations or aesthetic desires influence him.

Willie bought the used mobile home in June 1980. He paid 650 dollars for it; and paid 125 dollars to move it to the land where it is now located. The mobile home, made in 1956, was originally ten by sixty-five feet. When Willie bought the land he planned that he would slowly alter the mobile home into a "ranch house" which would be a place for him and his wife to get away. After nine years, Willie claims he has still not finished it. Remarking about his work and the existing state of the home Willie said, "When you take this long to do a project you can find lots of things you want to change."[8] Willie has changed everything about the structure that once resembled a mobile home.

Beginning with the front of the mobile home, Willie tore down the end wall and extended the old bedroom by ten

feet while also raising the ceiling a few feet. (See Plate 2) The room, now a family room, boasts a motel television bracketed to the wall. This room, as well as the rest of the home, has been completely dry walled. The material, called dry wall or sheet rock, is commonly used in conventional homes allowing for better insulation and providing a smooth surface porous to any paint. All of the ceilings have been remodeled by adding a textured paint bought from a local Lowes. All mobile homes ceilings typically have this textured appearance which cast light shadows across the ceiling. This effect is aesthetically appealing to any viewer especially when freshly painted. Willie has added western cedar beams and complementary molding which extends across the width of each room.

The kitchen area, which also has a breakfast nook near the sliding glass door, was once the area of a kitchen/living room plus a nearby bedroom. Willie has taken out the partitions, thereby adding more space to the kitchen. The area is now approximately 10 by 20 feet. The design of the kitchen is attributed to Willie's wife, Sue. As Willie stated one day: "And of course, the cabinets here, anything that is new in here, attribute this to the wife, she just wouldn't have it any other way."[9] The statement reveals Sue's primary role as designer, and her preference for modern conveniences in the kitchen. The cabinets have a rough wooden finish, and are arranged in a

L-shape along one corner in the kitchen. Underneath one section is a compact microwave which was bought used. The sink and appliances look new. Although the L-shape kitchen work station is typical of most mobile home kitchens, the appearance is neat and spacious which reveals efficiency and personal aesthetics. One side of the kitchen has a sliding glass door which opens up into a den. The other side of the kitchen is adjacent to the living room/dining area which has a bar/service window cut into the wall.

Directly down the hall a few feet past the kitchen is the bathroom. The renovated bathroom was once a portion of a middle bedroom. A few feet were taken from the kitchen area to accommodate a double vanity. Willie and Sue's only comment on the original bathroom was that it was ugly and too small. Although there was once a third bedroom between the master bedroom and the bathroom, Willie has taken out all of the old partitions in order to have enough space for a larger bathroom and master bedroom. (See Plate 3) In the bedroom, Willie pierced through the mobile home wall to allow for a large window which is directly above a dresser he had intended on placing there.

Willie has taken all the old crank windows out of the mobile home and has replaced them with sash windows. In building a 2x4 studded exterior wall completely around the mobile home, Willie was able to place sash windows throughout the home. These renovations suggest that Willie

desired a more refined interior and exterior construction surrounding his home. Even the metal back door that was once on the mobile home is completely covered by both exterior and interior walls.

The electricity to the home has been bootlegged from his nearby barn. Willie has taken a 200 ampere distribution panel and placed it near the master bedroom. The electrical service extends from the barn to the home and then out into the fields to supply electricity for the oil wells. The home has been completely rewired.

For a reason Willie did not explain he acquired permits for his plumbing facilities and for the septic tank which was done eight years ago, but he did not obtain an electrical or a building permit. Willie stated that if he went to get an electrical permit that they would probably require him to have a building permit. So, it appears he did not obtain the permits, because he found them restrictive or superfluous.

Willie is very proud of the family room he built, which extends from the kitchen. The room measuring twenty by twenty feet was the first addition that Willie built. Willie has built a raised platform and fire wall both of which are made of fire brick. On the middle of the platform there is a wood stove and its flue is directed toward the back wall and into an outside chimney. Willie stated to me his concern for fire safety, which probably derived from his

experience with the fire that engulfed his last home. The room is a bit dark, which Willie brings up in the conversation. After almost finishing the room he realized that the existing two windows, which face the shade of the sycamore trees, do not allow a lot of light to enter the room. Willie recognizes the slight imperfection but states; "If I had to do it all over now--I'm not going to do it at this time--but maybe sometime in the future I will put in a bay window."[10] For now Willie has hung fluorescent lighting flush against the wall and ceiling. He has disguised the exposed lighting by nailing cedar boards, parallel to the lighting, to the ceiling; egg crate material will be placed along the bottom of cedar boards extending back to the wall, allowing the light to illuminate downward along the walls. The beam rafters in this room taken from the barn were once tier poles. The living room, like the whole house, possess a myriad mix of salvaged materials and items bought used or new. As Willie states:

> Well, you can pick up so far then you have to go and buy. Because you cannot find interior finishes or exterior finishes, and even the rafters in our living room out front there was tier poles out in the barn. I used what I had up to a point.[11]

The exterior of the home also utilizes an abundance of used and new materials. Willie has torn down approximately a half dozen utility sheds, taking the materials from them in exchange for the demolition. Willie claims that if you can work for three or four days and get three or four

hundred dollars worth of materials then it is worth it.

Willie's home has a hip roof with asphalt shingles. When asked why he used asphalt shingles instead of tin, still fairly popular in the area, he claimed he would rather have a material that he felt he could handle freely and would not leak. In a later interview Willie told me specifically why he choose a hip roof rather than a gabled roof. He claims that a hip roof will easily camouflage the impurities of the construction if certain aspects are not plumb or true. Willie also thinks a hipped roof looks better than a gabled roof because the gables are not visible. The nature of the elevation and the construction of the home is suited better for a hipped roof. An additional factor which may have influenced Willie's decision is that all the materials, except the shingles, were salvaged to complete the roof. For a year, only black roofing felt paper covered the existing mobile home roof.

Willie's chimney is constructed of an inner core consisting of fourteen by fourteen-inch flue block tile, surrounded by concrete blocks and paved with cement. For several years Willie had his flue extending upward but did not have the masonry finished because he didn't have the proper flashing to buttress it along the roof line, although now it is finished.

The outer siding of the home consists of varying sizes of hardboard masonite siding bought from Lowes, a local

hardware store. The siding is now almost completely painted brown; however, Willie mention once changing the color.

The home is braced by concrete block foundation piers. A two by four exterior wall surrounds the mobile home. There is no place where the old existing mobile home is visible; even the interior of the home is finished so few details resemble a mobile home.

There are several cultural contexts that surround and help define Willie and Sue's home, which reward examination. The neighboring landscape near Willie and his home consists mainly of farms ranging in size from twenty-five to three hundred acres. Many farms in the area are not cultivated for tobacco or corn, although some, similar to Willie's, possess scattered oil and gas wells. Several area farms have cattle grazing, while others are merely open rolling fields with stands of timber that may be cut for future monetary gains. Willie and Sue own approximately one hundred acres. Over the past six years Willie has drilled three oil wells which produce an average amount of oil for the area. Willie and Sue's long range plan, although a few others have been mentioned, is to settle down on the farm and continue to prospect for additional oil. The home and the landscape are a means to live debt free for Willie and Sue. As Willie states:

> No, I don't really plan on selling this place, because I continue to try to find oil. And we have found a little here. And my intent is to, as money becomes available to drill a new well. One of the main

> reasons that maybe I want to actually move into this is because I can be debt free, and still have money to drill a well or two.[12]

An additional option that links the wells to the home and thus back to Willie is the ability to run a natural gas line from the wells to a gas furnace to heat the home. Willie claims that it would not take much work to connect a gas burning furnace to the existing duct work in the old mobile home and then to create expansion ducts to heat the extensions.

The idea of being self-sufficient dominates Sue's conversations. She is very proud that the home is energy efficient. Because of her role as designer, the home has been fully insulated. Insulation is between the exterior walls and the existing mobile home walls. In addition, insulation was placed between the newly constructed interior walls and the mobile home's interior walls. A large ceiling fan in the living room along with the unit air conditioner in the den cools the home. The house is heated by the wood stove; and Willie has mentioned plans for placing a gas furnace somewhere outside the home with adjacent ducts throughout the home. For Willie and Sue having their options open and available provides a sense of security and means of mobility if other desires arise.

When analyzing the home, the landscape, or the barn full of salvaged materials, one can see each item is a reflection of Willie and Sue's ideologies. These salvaged

materials are meaningful metaphors that reveal a vital aspect of Willie and Sue's life; a desire to remain in control of their home and surroundings. The diverse amount of salvaged materials, along with the multifaceted farm acreage permits them freedom to change their minds and their surroundings as years pass. A major reason why Willie chose drywall over panelling is the material's ease of manipulation. One day Willie discussed with me his decision in choosing drywall:

> Well, it was either to replace the paneling or put up drywall. And as far as an insulator or as fire protection and everything else we thought that the drywall would be a lot safer and we could finish it with paint or paper or whatever we decide to as time goes along. Right now, we've painted all the areas, but you know how women are, I'm sure you do, they'll want to paper this or mirror that and no telling what. With a drywall, verses panelling you can do what anything you want to do with it, to a point.[13]

The mobile home, now a home, and the farm have changed over the past nine years mainly because of Willie and Sue's desire to work continually on the farm. The more time they spend there, the more they realized that the surroundings were not exactly what they wanted, so it gradually changed with each trip onto the land. The land and the home can also be analyzed by examining the recurring conflicts and resolutions between Willie and Sue as they attempted to manipulate the existing forms of their surroundings. Willie mentioned once before that they were not in a hurry to move in, because they did have a home in town. As time past,

however, they did see the possibilities of the home becoming a permanent residence. The existing home under the sycamores is now a product of both Willie and Sue's vision of how it should look and what purpose the home should serve. The home has evolved mainly because of a tension between what Willie wanted to do with the home, or rather what he would have left alone, and what Sue's wanted the home to look like. As Sue commented:

> I told him, I wish he had taking it off anywhere except here. But he started taking out the partition in it. And the bathroom in there was horrible, it was a half bath. It had ugly pink fixtures in it. And nobody lived in this thing for years. It had set up on someone's farm and nobody had been living in it for quite awhile. So, he buys it at this auction, and brings it in out here and sets it up, and starts piddling with it. I mean piddling was what he did. He was just here messing. I got aggravated more than a few times with it. Finally, on the last of it, he made it look like, maybe, it was going to look like something. Then I came in and started offering suggestions here and there. Like the manufactured cabinets which makes the kitchen fairly desirable. Of course, it's out of square in all kinds of places. And I'd argue about that. Well, what are we going to do if the carpet, if it's running off down hill in the bedroom. [Laughs] He says, "Don't worry about it, we'll take care of it." Finally, we decided that most of the areas that have to be carpeted, even though if places tend to run off down hill, that we could put double padding in, and a nice red carpet like in here in this room, the bedroom. Even though it is there it wouldn't be as noticeable.[14]

There is little doubt that, for Sue, the idea of Willie "piddling" on an old and dilapidated mobile home was a waste of time. Probably not until Willie had opened spaces by tearing out partitions, and Sue began to participate in aspects of design renewal, did the project appear like a

worthwhile venture. It probably wasn't until after several years of negotiation between Willie and Sue, considering Willie's work technique, that the home became a representation of what both Willie and Sue's imagined it could become. Willie, too, saw problems with the existing mobile home, but his tensions, small, if any, arose from time limitations and the need for housing materials. As Willie stated:

> Originally, we decided to fix the place up to where we could come on the weekend out on the farm. And the more we got into it, the more we disliked what was actually there. It wasn't worth putting panelling or something on, because we did not want the panelling. We wanted to go with dry wall, and the space was just not suitable for what we wanted. As you can see a lot of the overhead structure is used material.[15]

The home now is nearing completion; the exterior is painted, the carpet needs laying down, but they are moving in soon. During my last visit with them I asked the question: At what stage did the mobile home become a house? As Willie thought, he looked down into my hands holding photographs of the documented stages the home went through, then stated:

> The siding as you observed there in some of the photographs that we took from time to time during the phase of covering up this mobile home. The last part that we covered up was this end that we are facing here [opposite side from the road] now, which is toward the northwest, and that was the last part that I framed, and sheeted and covered up, and that was the last point where the mobile home didn't show anymore. So, somewhere around 1986 it became a cabin, or a shack, or a house instead of a mobile home. My wife prefers to call it a cabin, but I call it a shack quite often.[16]

Sue quickly commented on the physical nature of the home:

> It's the fact that we know that there's only a frame of the mobile home left in there. In other words it's got a roof line, it's got two long sides still left in it. But it no longer has the partitions that divided rooms. It still has some of the insulation, but most of that has been covered up or added to or something. So, it became part of the frame work, rather than remaining a mobile home. It's set on a permanent foundation. So, all of us have taken into consideration almost the fact that it will never be moved.[17]

Physically the mobile home has been covered, altered, and has taken the shape of a conventional house. It has been enveloped by Willie's salvaged and new materials. Both Sue and Willie no longer refer to their home as a mobile home. The home is no longer mobile or transitory, but rather a stationary image of their values and work, something much different than remolding a conventional home.

For both Willie and Sue the home has different symbolic qualities than a conventional home. It represents freedom from mortgages, and accessibilities to build further. It is physically a clean well-ordered structure. Willie remarked once on the difference between his home and a conventional home:

> But, if a person used new materials, and put a square plumb structure there, it wouldn't have been the same as that pile of kindling there, really. When you have to actually borrow the money to build a structure, and most of us do, not maybe everyone, you have a deadline on how long you can have a job completed to get the different monies. I went with this as I had the money to do it. It is a structure that you can live in. The kids are all grown now so that's all the space that I should need.[18]

Sue commented on the subject:

> And one of the advantages of having this is that we're not going to have any house payments on this at all. We've done it with things that we have found, except for the finishes, like he said . . . . It's far from being absolutely perfect, but we don't care if it's not exactly plumb in every little corner, because it is clean and it is pleasant, and it's away from the hustle and bustle of downtown and where everybody is normally on the weekend. So, if you just wanted to come and spend the time to walk over the farm, walk down around the pond, listen to your own brand of music, ignore the telephone, there's no phone on there right now, so it's easy to do. It's a comfortable place to spend the weekend, and not have to worry about everything.[19]

Willie and Sue's home and land represents a physical and symbolic ideology of living debt free, living within one's means, and bettering one's immediate surroundings. This vernacular structure can be read and understood within the cultural contexts that envelope it and by conversing with those who preside within it. The home is etched into the landscape. As one walks down to the pond stocked with fish, and out onto the fields where the smell of oil mingles with the parched dry fields, the home is etched into the landscape, as though it belongs. On one side of a hill there lies the torn out front of the old mobile home with its proclamation "Stardust" scarcely readable. That industrial home pulled off the assembly line in 1956 has now been manipulated into pleasant "shack."

This home does represent "folk" tradition. There is little doubt that when Willie goes to tear down a building

he quickly assesses the materials that can be salvaged. His red barn, fifty by one hundred feet, full of lumber, hot water heaters, electrically wiring, is a statement of that fact. His acquisition of used, durable appliances bought second-hand is in itself a folk tradition whether or not the activity has been documented by scholars. The home is vernacular in that it was built with local materials by a man with little academic training in design. This mobile home no longer resembles its counterparts found in fifty by one hundred feet lots of dozed parks. Examining Willie's work technique that afternoon made me realize that the home was a product of both achievement and compromise, entailing a day-to-day creativity that is as variable as the salvaged materials found in the nearby barn. Willie and Sue's home is a product of nine years of work and thought, nine years of making do with what one has on that particular day. It is truly a vernacular structure.

1. Tape recorded interview, Willie and Sue E., 27 March 1989.

2. Tape recorded interview, Willie and Sue E., 16 April 1989.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. For example see Michael Owen Jones, The Handmade Object and Its Maker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). Also Verni Greenfield, Making Do or Making Art: A Study of American Recycling (Ann Arbor, MI.: UMI Research Press, 1986).

6. Greenfield, 98.

7. Robert McCarl, The District of Columbia Fire Fighters' Project: A Case Study in Occupational Folklife, Smithsonian Folklife Studies No. 4 (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985).

8. Tape recorded interview, Willie and Sue E., 27 March 1989.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Tape recorded interview, Willie and Sue E., 16 April 1989.

13. Ibid.

14. Tape recorded interview, Willie and Sue E., 27 March 1989.

15. Ibid.

16. Tape recorded interview, Willie and Sue E., 16 April 1989.

17. Ibid.

18. Tape recorded interview, Willie and Sue E., 27 March 1989.

19. Tape recorded interview, Willie and Sue E., 16 April 1989.

Some Homes and Families

The other three families whom I interviewed live in homes much like Willie and Sue's. Although all of these homes differ in structure, each was created by builders reacting to very similar values and aesthetics, and economic circumstances.

Mr. William A. lived in a trailer court before buying his land six years ago on Browning Road located in a small community outside of Bowling Green. Around a year and a half ago he and his wife and children started building onto the mobile home. On the back of the mobile home is a shed addition. (See Plate 4) The entrance to the addition is through the old back door of the mobile home, relieving William from the necessity of cutting through the walls. As you walk into the addition, you are immediately in the youngest daughter's bedroom. To the right of her room is an additional door which leads to the son's bedroom. His bedroom is approximately the same size. A door to an outside patio is at the end of his room. The addition was built from plywood boards bought at Lowes. The inside walls still have the rough finish found on most plywood. The roof is a basic shed roof constructed from 2x4s and covered with aluminum sheeting. The roof extends outward, a few inches lower from the roof line of the existing mobile home.

When I asked William why he built the addition, he quickly replied: "Well, I built it for my kids, for two more bedrooms."[1] Although the need for additional space was the primary reason, William knew that if he would ever purchase land he would build onto his mobile home:

> Well, I told my wife if I ever bought any land. If I had a trailer, that I was going to build me some rooms and a porch on it. We lived in a trailer court before we got this land. I always said that if I ever got a place to pull my trailer that I was going to build onto it. So, that's what I've done.[2]

Restrictions enforced in trailer courts usually deter owners from substantially altering their homes. An additional deterrent is the possibility that one could become evicted or that the park could be sold. Similar to rental property tenants, mobile home tenants typically do not feel justified in putting a large investment of work and money into a dwelling that they do not have full control over. William, too, did not feel that the effort would be wise:

> No, there isn't anyway you could do that. [His son comments that the owners of the park wouldn't even let them have a dog.] No, see you don't know what is going to come up, they might you know, you never know what's going to come up on it.[3]

For William buying a plot of land afforded him both the mental stability and the tangible acreage to improve his mobile home without worrying that one day his efforts could be lost.

One main aspect of the home that draws the interest of

passers-by is the rock foundation. The home sits slightly on a hill about fifty yards from the road, which helps to illuminate the craftsmanship. Although the rock work serves as an underpinning to the block foundation, as you walk closer one can see that the rock is also extending upward along the aluminum siding of the mobile home. On the front of the home is a porch made of red cedar, which also has a rock foundation. (See Plate 5) Extending from the porch is a rock wall which gradually declines to the driveway. The rock underpinning surrounding the mobile home does not appear to be finished, suggesting that it will serve as a support foundation for the rock walls which will fully encapsulate the mobile home.

William's home is a product derived from a necessary expansion of living space and a limit of expendable income. The majority of materials used to build the addition were purchased at Lowes from money saved over a period of months. The rocks which form the underpinning and the future external walls were free. Located up the hill behind his house there is an abandoned filled rock quarry where he has found all of the rock. Because the rock was free and easily accessible, William utilized the resource. In addition to using the rock to lessen building expenses, he also used the rock because it was aesthetically appealing:

> I just made my mud up and laid them up, like you would do bricks or something like that. But it's a lot different laying rocks than it is bricks or block. Well, it's something like when you lay a puzzle down

> there and you just throw it all over the floor, you know, trying to put it back together . . . . Well, I kind of like the rock better. It shows up better, for some reason. Some people like brick. Which I already had them up here too, you know, so I save on--so I started picking up and laying them.[4]

There is an interesting correlation between "trying to put it back together" and "you know, so I save on--." For William the ability to build and feel the accomplishments derive from tangible efforts without entailing an excessive expense has, no doubt, aesthetic qualities. The art of piecing together a puzzle is an accurate metaphor to describe the mental acumen needed to properly lay rock. William was relating to me two value statements which probably please him immensely. One, portrays his own self-recognition of his capabilities of having the patience and keenness required to successfully put together puzzles or do intricate rock work. The other value statement is, that not only can he do this, but that he was able do this without incurring excessive expenses. This probably explains why he likes rock better than brick or block; rock requires more skill to lay than brick, and luckily his rock was free, which further produces a pleasing aesthetic experience.

The lack of expendable income is, no doubt, a daily recognition in William's family. His need to provide adequate housing for his growing family at an affordable cost does limit his aesthetic desires. During our interview I asked the question; "Why do you think you did this?" His

reply was:

> Well, really to save money . . . . One day I'll have a house out of it. It'll be just like a house. The only way you can tell it's a trailer is to come in here. You know, it's hard to just go out here and get all your stuff together and just go ahead and build one unless you got plenty of money. I ain't the type that's got all that's got all that kind of money. You just have to do as you can get to build it.[5]

I also asked a complementary question to the one above. "Why didn't you just start building a small house and add onto it as you went along?" His reply was:

> Well, the money part is what it is. I thought maybe I could take my time and take a little money as I go, and go on up with it like a house.[6]

It should be clear that the lack of extra money does define the parameters of aesthetic desires and building outcomes. William should be proud that he was able to challenge his building acumen as well as lower the costs in building his home. In addition to the added bedrooms and the rock work little more has been done structurally to the mobile home. At one time there was a third bedroom beyond the living room but the partition that separated the bedroom and the living room was torn down, thereby creating a larger living room. In the living room there is a large wood stove which thoroughly heats the entire home. During the interview William related a story which I have heard and personally experienced before. The story reveals to the listener the teller's independence from the high costs of utility companies; relating how the wood stove heats so well in the

winter that the home will get so hot that the doors must be opened. This account indirectly reveals the homeowners' desire for a more self-reliant life.

William does have a plan for finishing his home, which reveals why he built the addition in the back:

> Well, the reason I decided to put it there, one day I'm going to rock near the whole thing. Put rocks all the way up to the top, put a little gable on it. And this out here, right where I've got it back out here, that's going to be a patio. I'm going to build a concrete patio back there . . . . Yes, one day maybe I can get it the way I want it, I'm going to lay me two big rock posts out there [the front driveway] too.

There is no reason why William should not have used the rock that is so abundant on his land. Economically he had very little choice; either he could build with brick, buying what he could afford each month, or use the rock, which was free. For a man who works three jobs to support his family the choice was obvious. His dilemma now in finishing his home is not the lack of materials or money, although he must still buy cement, but rather, finding the time to finish rocking up his home. If William is like Willie, the work is not seen as a chore, but rather as a means to enjoy a creative and productive afternoon, when he can find the time.

At the end of the interview William told me about the time he was landscaping his land shortly after buying it. The narrative seems to bring the discussion about him and his rocks full circle:

> When I first bought this land there was big old rocks and it was grown up, torn trees. And when I started to clean it up I got it dozed off, you know, can't doze it all off because the rocks kept coming out and coming up. So, out there on the front yard I bet you I got twenty-three pick-up loads of rocks off the front yard there.[8]

William gained the knowledge of building onto his mobile home from a close relative, his father:

> There's a lot of people who take trailers--my daddy, he had his 10x50, and he has a nine room house out of his. You can't even tell it's no trailer there . . . . I helped him a lot on that. We laid the block. You know, poured concrete and laid block. Built a nine room house out of it . . . . Yes, he painted it white. He trimmed it up like--well, he really trimmed--when we laid the block we plastered it, and beaded it like rocks and then painted it. Painted the bead in the, you know, the plaster black and it looks just like rock . . . . Well, he started off a bigger--like he'd build on front for a kitchen. Then he went from a kitchen to the side of it and made him a bedroom and he went from the trailer in the back and started building on it and made a living room out the back. He made a living room and a kitchen and two bedrooms and a bath on the back. You just can't, when you go by there when you see you say well there's a house, and there was a trailer sitting there. Like I say, until you walk in then you can see the little trailer on the inside. It was a 10x50 is what it was; a little trailer.[9]

Eighteen years ago William's father and his family started building onto the little trailer and a year later the home was finished. His parents no longer live in it, but rather have rented it out and subsequently bought a two-story house in Franklin, Kentucky. After I interviewed William that day I drove to his father's white-blocked home. The home has been divided into two rentals. As I pulled into the driveway a man who rents one side of it came out and talked

with me, but the timing wasn't right so I merely photographed the house, said thanks, and left. The home is rectangular, the painted block is cracking, and the roof is low and flat. The back yard is thick with green grass. There is little doubt that it is an improvement over the small metal home lodged inside it. I am sure that William saw the home as a large home while growing up in it, and this later influenced his perception of what can be done with any mobile home.

For William, owning land which could be used freely without worrying whether he would be evicted has been a goal for quite awhile. With a plentiful supply of rocks on the hillside and seven acres of land, he will eventually have a comfortable and attractive four bedroom rock home. It is what he has planned, and will no doubt soon become a reality for both himself and his family.

Rudy and Louise live on Scotsville Road near Alvaton, Kentucky. As you travel U.S. 31W and approach their home you quickly notice the clean, neat yard which converges with the mobile home and adjacent carport. When I arrived one afternoon, Rudy answered the door and at first was hesitant to talk with me, but then his wife told me to come in. I sat and talked with her while he watched television in the same room. She told me that they moved into the mobile home in 1960 after living in a conventional house in Bowling

Green. They moved out of the house, she stated, because the area where they lived was "growing up," and becoming crowded. In 1960 they sold their house and furnishings and then bought the 10x50 mobile home. Apparently, it was one of the only models being sold in Bowling Green at the time. Louise said that what she most like about it was the china closet in the kitchen. After purchasing the mobile home, they moved into Hillview trailer park. It is interesting that they moved out of their house, because the area was "growing up," only to move into a trailer park which must have seemed crowded too. Nevertheless, they stayed there for four years, didn't like it there, so they bought the little plot of land in Alvaton. She did mentioned why they left the trailer park:

> Well, you have people right next door to you again. You had no place for parking facilities. People had dogs and you didn't have dogs, and other people had cats and you didn't have cats. We had a chance to get a little piece of ground out here and we bought it.[70]

Shortly after moving to Alvaton, roughly a year, they began to build onto their trailer. They built a 10x20 foot addition which extends from the front of the mobile home and down its length. The area extending from the remaining length of the mobile home has a poured concrete patio which is covered by an aluminum awning. The addition and the patio, as with the horizontal length of the mobile home, is parallel to the road. The driveway extends from the side around and behind the trailer to a carport adjacent to the

end of the addition and trailer. The carport is positioned so close to the front of the home that a small three feet walkway is the only barrier dividing the home and carport. (See Plate 6) The roof of the carport extends outward toward the home and shelters those that pass between the two. At a ninety degree angle adjacent to the carport is a small one-car garage built from block and painted white. A boat, sold long ago, was once stored inside. The garage now houses the usual garden tool paraphernalia and Louise's large American car which doesn't quite fit, as its trunk juts outward. Next to the garage is a fence that separates many large Holsteins from the driveway and the home. The whole area of land, approximately 75 x 150 feet, which encompasses the home, the carport, the garage, the front yard and side garden, and driveway fits tightly but neatly, almost having a symmetry of sorts.

The main room in the home is the large addition. It was built by a trained carpenter. The room is of frame construction with light pine panelling walls and a white textured ceiling resembling the ceiling throughout the rest of the home. The room possesses the typical television, two chairs, and sofa. Two large windows facing the road fully illuminate the room. The exterior of the addition is sheathed with white aluminum siding. The exterior of the trailer, once red, is now white aluminum. The roof is also aluminum which replaced the standard galvanized roof. The

older roof is merely under the present one. The appearance of the mobile home has changed very little, except for the use of the modern materials; it still resembles a mobile home.

An interesting variation of the home is its cellar. This was dug out after the home was placed on its solid perimeter block foundation. Because the home was set on blocks, which raised the home approximately one-and-half feet above the ground, an additional four feet was dug out to create the cellar. The cellar was dug out in two stages. At first only one half of the area under the trailer was finished and lined with block. Later, the other half was dug out, although was not blocked in. The work was done by Rudy alone. Several small cellar windows, resembling those found in conventional homes, were placed into the block underpinning. When I asked Louise what was kept under there, she simply replied that it was like a root cellar where they stored vegetables and other foods.

Louise and I talked some about the differences between a house and a mobile home. She mentioned that she likes the kitchen very much and made a comparison to kitchens found in conventional houses:

> If you look at new houses now their kitchens are set up just like in a trailer . . . . You just stand in one place and do everything. It's all around the stove."

She also mentioned that they now have just as much space as when they lived in their conventional home on Kitten Street.

This home in the country does provide Rudy and Louise with a sense of privacy even though there is a neighbor several hundred feet down the road. The home is quite large for two people, and yet small enough to heat and cool inexpensively. The area of land, though small for some, is large enough to have a front lawn, a small patio, a small vegetable garden, and the appropriate outbuildings to house tools and automobiles. The minimal aspect of its design is quite sufficient for them since they are both retired and wish to live comfortably. At one time after buying the land in Alvaton, they thought about building a house and selling the mobile home, but as Louise succinctly stated; "But nobody would give us enough money for it."[12] So, they stayed and built onto the mobile home, and have been there since.

Dale B., his wife and two children live on Blue Level Road outside the city limits of Bowling Green. They bought the two acre plot of land five years ago. Their land, begining from the road, cascades gently down a hill, as does everyone's land on this side of the road. As you drive down Blue Level Road and through the plentiful S-curves and rolling landscape you notice the beautiful farm country. Dale's home is located parallel to the road at the base of a curve. An addition has been built along the back of the mobile home. A framed gabled roof with asphalt shingles

covers both the addition and the mobile home. The home resembles a typical ranch house found in suburban areas.

When Dale's family first moved here there was already a 10x50 feet mobile home on the land. This home was taken off the land, and is now used at Dale's body shop:

> I use it for parts, office and stuff like that. I got car parts in it, just like a storage bin.[13]

Dale replaced this home with a 12x65 foot home, the home he presently lives in. After three years Dale, his wife, and his brother-in-law began building onto their mobile home. Two main factors influenced why and how Dale built onto his home. First, was the need for additional space:

> I've got two boys and they were both in the same bedroom, and they didn't like it.[14]

Secondly, the costs incurred had to be minimal. At first they thought of getting a double-wide mobile home but found that it was too expensive:

> It was three years later that we decided to put us a double-wide in but it cost too much, so we started building on . . . . Yes, them double-wides are sixteen or seventeen thousand dollars.[15]

Even the idea of selling the mobile home and starting to build a house was out of the question for Dale. As he states, "It's too much; I didn't have that much cash."[16] The only alternative then was to do the work themselves and build on gradually as expendable income filtered in. Luckily, his brother-in-law, a professional carpenter,

provided a lot of help in building the addition.

The addition's foundation is set on concrete block piers which resembles construction methods used in blocking mobile homes. The addition is framed, "just like a house," using 2x4 studs in constructing a balloon frame. By removing the rear door and fully piercing through an existing window and wall of the mobile home, access was gained to the addition. The arrangement of the rooms in the addition follows a parallel sequence similar to those in the mobile home. (See Plate 7) Where the existing kitchen is located, the space aligning it in the addition also serves as an extended kitchen. It is the same for the living room in both sides. Further back in the addition are two bedrooms, which are located near the existing bedrooms in the mobile home. The design of the entire home does resemble a double-wide home, which usually closely resembles a single-wide floor plan only having the additional space in the living room and kitchen. The total room allotment reflects how Dale envisions his home: two living rooms, two kitchens, one bath, and four bedrooms, two in each side. The interior walls of the addition are composed of sheet rock. The addition measures ten by sixty-five feet, which brings the total space of the structure to twenty-two by sixty-five feet. It is almost as big as the average double-wide, and provides plenty of space for a family of four.

Dale gained access to most of his materials through a

myriad of sources. Most were bought new, others used from salvage marts, and still yet others were received through Dale's brother-in-law and other relatives. An octagon folding screen was brought from Florida by a cousin which will be used in the future on a back porch. Because of the necessity to save on costs of supplies, Dale, like others I have interviewed, frequently looks for materials at salvage marts and may sometimes find slightly damaged materials at lesser cost in local Lowes or Wicks stores. Dale did mention where he got some of the materials:

> We bought all the windows and doors up here at this salvage mart; most of them. And we got some of them off the docks back there at Lowes, that was damaged. That door there [the back door on the addition] we got off--that inside door--it was a two hundred dollar door and somebody messed it up trying to put it in or something. We got it for fifteen or twenty dollars.[17]

The metal sheathed door, resembling those found on most mobile homes, is slightly dented, but is barely noticeable behind the screen door. The door is functional and sturdy which overrides the visual aesthetic loss resulting from the dent.

Dale's personal aesthetic of the building is no doubt fostered by his belief that a strong, durable material that also possess traditional qualities is most desirable. The clapboard siding surrounding his home is not the typical aluminum siding found on mobile homes, but rather it is the more durable vinyl, as Dale mentioned that afternoon:

> That's vinyl. Shoot, that's the only way to go. It

> doesn't bend; it doesn't break. They put vinyl siding on all these old houses and stuff like that. It's got a fifteen year warranty with it.[18]

One could surmise that his choice of siding was also influenced by his daily recognition of other homes in the area that also possess the material. His decision to use the vinyl material was probably guided by the acknowledgment of neighborhood aesthetics and the knowledge that the material is durable.

Dale' home visually resembles one whole unit, although he described the home acknowledging its two distinctive units. During our conversation he would switch back and forth describing the home as one unit and then as two separate units, "this side and the other side." This distinction arose during our discussion on the quality of construction between the two units. The mobile home unit still has the panelled walls, although the addition has sheet rocked walls. Dale did mentioned that you can tell the difference during the winter:

> Yes, there's a lot of difference in the winter time than being on this side and the other side. You can feel the cool air coming through that trailer wall. When we tore that wall out to build that side there. We tore all that tin off and the insulation wasn't but a quarter inch thick. I've got two inch insulation up over the top now on this side. When I put that porch on the front side I'm going to put two inches of insulation there. It'll make it pretty warm.[19]

Dale, like Willie, seems to be proud of the fact that his construction methods and amount of insulation are much

better and more plentiful, respectively, than the "other side" of the home. His desire to control his immediate environment, namely his home and land surrounding it, is reflected in his actions already enacted on the home, and in his conversation about plans for the home. Although both sides of the home are currently on a block pier foundation, in the future Dale will build a more permanent foundation for the entire home:

> Instead of that underpinning like that it will be a block foundation, just like a house. We're going to build a front porch on the front side of it. Slap it on the trailer there and insulate it real good, like this side is . . . . Yes, I plan on building my porch ten feet wide and thirty-five feet long, and later on I might go on down to the ends and box it in and make the front side look like a house too . . . . I'm going to build a big deck on the back side here. I've got me an octagon screen there to put it on it when I get it. We're going to put a whirlpool in it.[20]

Dale also mentioned building a small workshop down the hill. It is apparent that Dale has the ability and the determination to continue improving his home. His mobile home serves as a nuclear core from which he can build around.

Across the street from Dale's home is a home with dark masonite siding and a hip roof, although inside it is a mobile home. As Dale said, "It looks just like a house."[21] There is little doubt that when Dale brought his mobile home to his land, talked with his neighbor and saw the converted mobile home, he too soon realized that he could have a larger, conventional-looking home.

Towards the end of the interview Dale went back to fiddling with his John Deere riding lawnmower. He mentioned to me that he bought it used and that if he ever wanted to sell it he probably could get back the money invested in it. He stated this with an acknowledged realization that it was a good investment, much like the investment that presently shelters himself and his family.

1. Tape recorded interview, William A., 16 July 1989.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Tape recorded interview, Louise W., 27 July 1989.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Tape recorded interview, Dale B., 1 October 1989.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.

Conclusions

After examining the four homes and the families who reside in them, what can be concluded about these forms? All of them share similarities, and yet each possesses an individualistic style. Interestingly enough, that which characterizes each form, also fosters a common bond among them, namely, the cultural, environmental and economic contexts which surround them.

All of these homes have distinct characteristics because each is a product derived from the owners' personal aesthetics and values. Each owners' desire for personal autonomy is exemplified in all four homes. Willie and Sue desired a place to get away from it all. Although they have a home in town, their cabin affords them even more privacy. Their quest also was to obtain economic autonomy. The mobile home, as a core unit, provided Willie with a central form from which he could easily expand for a lesser cost than building from scratch and without borrowing money.

Although, Rudy and Louise's path to autonomy differs from Willie and Sue's, their home does meet their needs. As Rudy and Louise approached retirement they recognized a need to have a private, affordable and comfortable home. With an addition and small lot, their mobile home grants them privacy, and is easy and affordable to maintain. Louise's description of her kitchen reveals that she is comfortable

with the space and finds it as adequate as those in conventional homes.

The land surrounding William's home, has provided him the opportunity to freely expand and alter his mobile home without worrying about landlords. Although he is not economically self-sufficient, he does have a home that is his own.

Dale's home and land, like William's, has afforded him a means of being able to expand living space as his family grows. The mobile home form itself also provided Dale with a template which he used in designing and building his addition.

Although each form and each economic situation varies, the mobile home, as a unit, can provide adaquate shelter for any household. All of these homes have been bought, built and altered because each owner saw them as a economically viable means of obtaining more autonomy in their lives.

The availability of natural resources found on the land augments the degree of autonomy in each of the cases reviewed. A major reason why Willie and Sue have altered their mobile home and plan on living permanently in it is the possibility of becoming finacially self-supported. Their acreage is capable of being farmed, and is rich in oil and gas resources. Their pond is stocked with fish, providing food and leisure activities. Willie plans on changing the home's heating system in order to use the

natural gas found in his fields. The home also was strategically built under several large sycamores to provide shade in the summer. Even having access to two large barns already on the landscape has provided Willie storage space to collect and barter salvaged materials. So, the landscape, the available natural and material resources acted as a determinant for design decisions made by Willie and Sue. By fully understanding and utilizing the landscape, Willie and Sue have become more self-sufficient.

Although there are no oil and gas wells on William's land, his acreage does possess a great amount of fieldstone. The landscape has provide him a means of building a rock house, using the mobile home as a central core. The resources on the landscape, along with an inexpensive housing core, coupled with his ability to work with rock has allowed William's family to obtain housing autonomy. The landscape has helped provide that autonomy.

Even Rudy and Louise's land has given them some sense of autonomy. Their root cellar, along with the small vegetable garden is capable of providing food year-round. The acreage of land also is small enough for them to maintain.

The ownership of land, too, no doubt fosters a sense of security, which in turn inspires owners to fully develop their artistic tastes and aesthetic values. William stated that he would have never allocated time and money toward a

mobile home if he did not own land. The security in owning both the inexpensive housing form and land must have eased William's mind enabling him to be fully creative while building his home. The home will soon fully merge with its surrounding landscape of rocky hills.

These families' quest for a more self-sufficient life cannot only be seen in their tangible land and home, but also by observing their quests and initiatives. A primary reason why these homes look as they do is because of the owners' incessant work to improve their surroundings. Whether one examines Willie and Sue's effort over the last nine years, or William's desire to finish laying rock, or Dale's ideas of putting in a front porch and back deck with a whirlpool, it is apparent that their values associated with hard work spur their actions. Even the act of physically becoming involved with the land and housing form grants the owner a sense of control over his life; subsequently the landscape itself begins to change and reflect those characteristics intrinsic to the landscaper.

The type of materials used in these homes also exhibits individual aesthetic and value judgements. Because Willie and Sue were fortunate to live in another home while building onto their mobile home, Willie had the time to build using, almost solely, salvaged materials. For years Willie has razed buildings and bartered to acquire salvaged material. His desire to build his home from salvaged

material does appear to be a purist pursuit.[1] Willie did admit, however, that some items he had to buy; he also attributes the modern kitchen to his wife's insistence. Even now after almost completing his home, there is still a barn full of salvaged material. In choosing specific materials, Willie and Sue exhibit a quest for self-sufficiency; drywall or sheetrock offers fire protection, provides adequate insulation, and is easily painted. Having the home fully insulated was Sue's initiative in lowering utility costs. Willie constructed his hip roof mainly to disguise construction flaws, but also because, he claims, a hip roof is more appropriate to the contour of the landscape in that area. These materials are tangible items that reflect intangible values.

There is little doubt that when William began landscaping his yard he must have thought about what to do with the huge amount of fieldstone erupting from the ground. Even though he had helped his father years ago build a cement block home, using a trailer as its core, he must have realized that the stone could be utilized for home improvement. In using the stone, William lessened his building expenses and also expressed his skill in utilizing a material that would have otherwise been a burden to remove. Each stone he has laid exemplifies William's desire to remain as much in control of his life as possible.

When Dale spoke to me about his home he divided it into

"this side and the other side." One reason why he referred to it in this manner is because of the variant construction qualities in both sides. His addition was balloon-framed, like conventional construction methods, has adaquate insulation, along with sheet rocked walls, unlike the mobile home next to it. Dale knows which side was built using better craftsmanship, by referring to his home as separate units, he wished to clarify this to me. In consciously choosing vinyl clap-board siding to place on his home, Dale recognized and accepted a community aesthetic which views the siding as a durable, efficient, and tradition-based material. As he put it, "Shoot, that's the only way to go."[2] When Dale decided to use a dented steel door on his addition, he overrode the diminished aesthetic qualities by focusing on values associated with durability and resourcefulness. All of these chosen materials reflect personal values connotating a desire to be self-sufficient and resourceful.

While Willie did not directly say that they were trying to alter the mobile home to look like a house, he did state that the altered form was no longer a mobile home. Willie remarked that when the mobile home was completed covered up, or enveloped, that it was no longer a mobile home, but rather a shack or cabin. While Willie saw the transformation occuring when the outer image was covered, Sue perceived the change only after the interior was

altered. After taking out partions, widening rooms and creating new ones, the mobile home was now in her eyes only a "frame work." She also mentioned that even the frame is set on a permanent foundation, and will never be moved again.

William, however, did state that one day he will create a house from his mobile home. He too, recognized the future transformation occuring when the outside was covered up. The interior of his home still, and probably will, maintains the visual charteristics of a mobile home. He stated that soon, "The only way you can tell it's a trailer is to come in here."[3] One day passers-by will not see behind the stone walls. Out of the four cases in this study, it does appear that William in particular wants to physical alter the dwelling so that no one looking at the exterior can tell what is within it. This is how he perceived his father's home, and maybe now he wishes to reconstruct that image in his own home.

Dale did not say that he was consciously trying to convert his mobile home into a house, in fact, before he began building he thought of buying a double-wide mobile home. Each of the projects undertaken on the mobile home, and ones mentioned to be built in the future, however, were referred by Dale as being built, "just like a house." Even if Dale builds a front porch and blocks it in, each end of the mobile home will still be visible. It does not

therefore appear that Dale was concerned with visually enclosing the mobile home, but rather that he wanted the space and amenities of a conventional home and believed that the quality of the work could be as good as that found in a conventional home.

No matter how these homes are perceived, they have taken on a shape and represent something that is no longer a mobile home, but yet is not quite a conventional house. Willie stated that his home is not the same as a conventional home, and affectionately stated; "But, if a person used new materials, and put a square plumb structure there, it wouldn't have been the same as that pile of kindling there, really."[4] Sue also stated; "But we don't care if it's not exactly plumb in every little corner, because it is clean and it is pleasant."[5]

I believe these two statements attest to the fact that each form is an individual creation derived from a variety of visions, materials and personal values that have molded and merged together. Each of these homeowners envisioned something better than their current living situation, and no doubt, as they progressed through the building process they incurred problems, reached compromises, created justifications, and continued onward. This is the reason why "that pile of kindling" is not the same as a conventional home, and why it never could be.

Because each of these homes is so closely allied with

each owner's values and attainment of dreams, and because these dreams and values change and shift gradually over time, some of these homes will reflect those changes. Claude Lèvi-Strauss's conception of the bricoleur could describe Willie and Sue, Dale, and William, and each of their homes. The bricoleur takes part in a bricolage process in which new ideas of objects are compared to older ideas, thereby creating a new synthesis. Because bricoleurs work in a retrospective manner, they must assess what materials they have to use toward a certain means. As the bricoleurs collect materials and assess their potential value, these materials take on cultural connotations applied by the bricoleur's conceptions at that time. As they build with materials that they have previously assigned a particular merit, together with new materials that are characterized with similar values, typically these items meshed together create a synthetic idea, something very similar to the two but appearing altogether different.[6]

Willie and Sue's home is a product of bricolage. While Willie collects and assigns value to salvaged material and plans on how it will fit into the final project, his home, he is in the process of collecting more material, assigning it specific value. As time passes Willie has collected material with varying ascribed values. His house has taken shape because he has re-assessed and re-designed as he gathered more materials and as his vision or ideas of the

home changed. His home has evolved because of his own life changing and because he is a bricoleur and speaks through the medium of his materials; "giving an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes between the limited possibilities."[7] Although Willie's possibilities are not fully limited, the materials, the contexts surrounding his life, become a synthesis carrying connotations of variant ideas.

The mobile home as a form may help facilitate the bricolage process. Because the mobile home has evolved from a synthesis in and of itself, and because it is still changing, our conception of this form is not clearly defined. This ambiguity of ascribed values toward the mobile home allows for varying interpretation, which in turn affects the manipulators' opinion of how this form may serve their needs, and how to characterize each home. Can Willie claim this his home is a conventional house? No, it is a form imbued with a sythesis of ideas about housing. Dale, too, found it difficult to define his home, and thus referred to it as two distinct units. Dale knows what materials connote values associated with conventional housing, but he is not certain how his home, a synthesis, could be characterized. Each of these homes has been built from materials of assigned value. All of these parts, however, do not neccessarily clearly define the altered mobile home. Because of the bricolage process a new

synthesis has been created.

Christopher Alexander, a design theorist, alludes to the bricolage process when he states:

> Every design problem begins with an effort to achieve fitness between two entities: the form in question and its context. The form is the solution to the problem; the context defines the problem. In other words, when we speak of design, the real object of discussion is not the form alone, but the ensemble comprising the form and its context.[8]

All of the contexts surrounding the mobile home form, materials, landscape, economic limitations, and certainly ascribed values, play an important role in the design process. Each builders' bricolage process includes this ensemble.

In order for folklorists to understand the manipulated mobile home they must examine these ensembles, and they must seek out the contexts which surround and define the form. There is little doubt that the mobile, or rather manufactured, home will continue to evolve and our ascribed values of these homes will evolve too. Both new manufactured homes and the manipulated mobile homes will continue remaining a synthesis; a synthesis of value, work and need.

1. Thanks to Dr. Erika Brady for bringing this to my attention.

2. Tape recorded interview, Dale B., 1 October 1989.

3. Tape recorded interview, William A., 16 July 1989.

4. Tape recorded interview, Willie and Sue E., 27 March 1989.

5. Tape recorded interview, Willie and Sue E., 16 April 1989.

6. Claude Lèvi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 16-22.

7. Lèvi-Strauss, 21.

8. Christopher Alexander, Notes On The Synthesis of Form (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 15-16.

Plate One

Plate Two

Plate Three

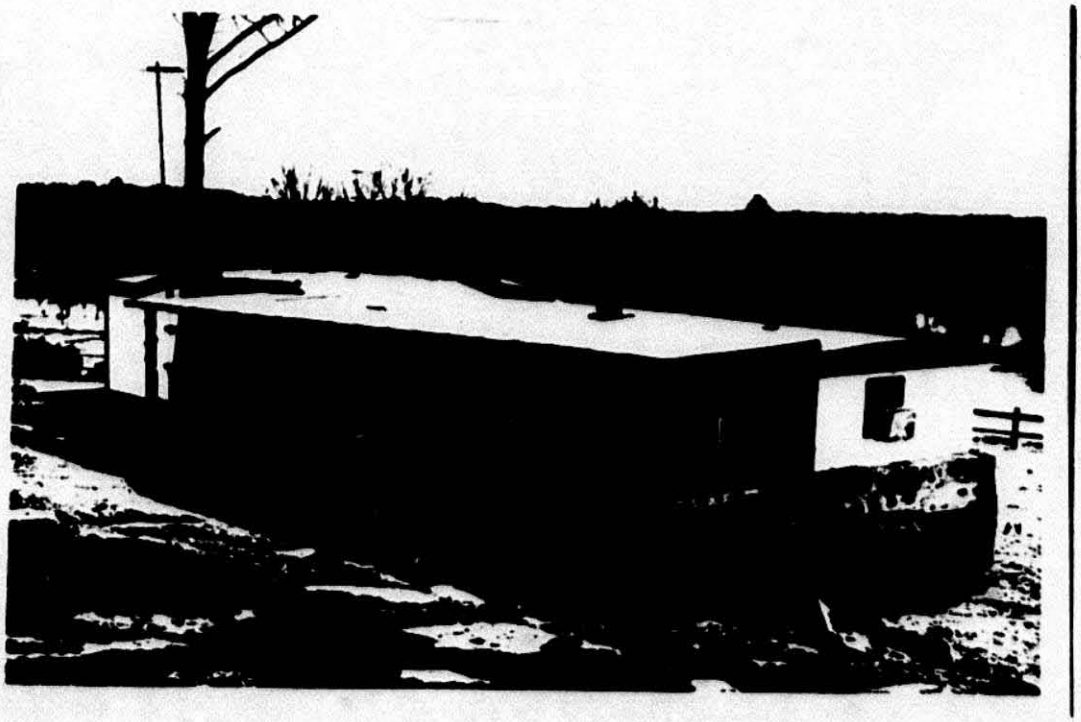

Plate Four

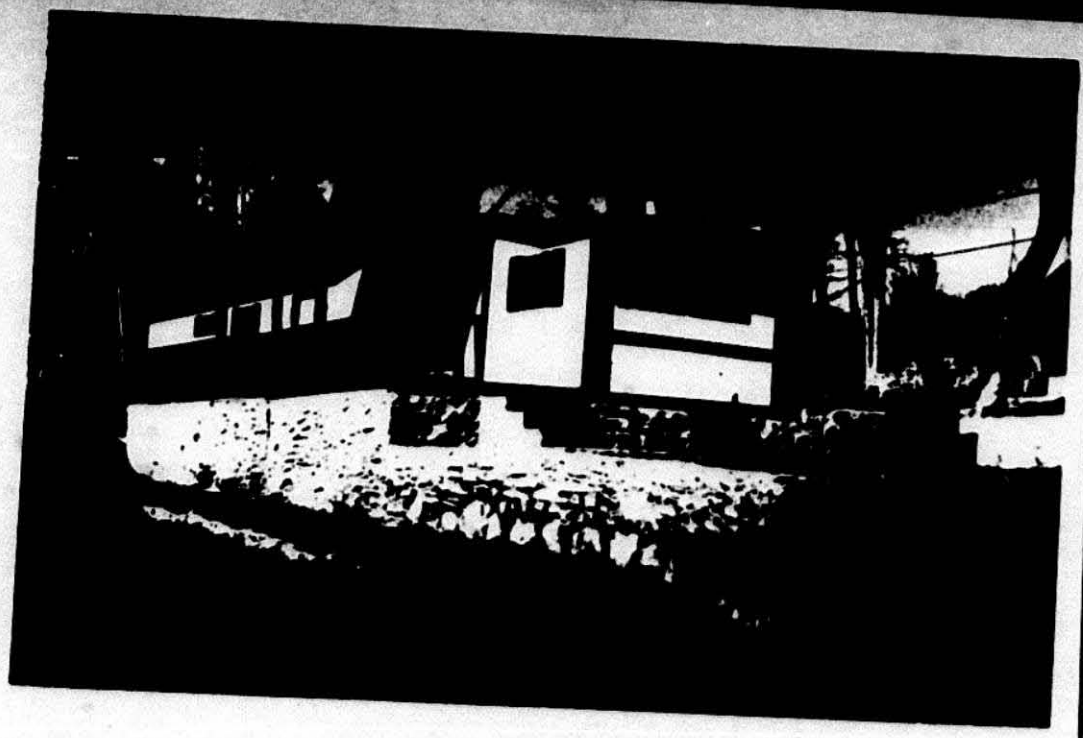

Plate Five

Plate Six

Plate Seven

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